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E3 2003: PART 1 P29

The first of our two-part E3 2003 roundup, including *Half-Life 2*, *Thief III*, *Black & White 2*, *Tron 2.0*, *Star Trek: Elite Force II* and many, many more.

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Show-ing Off



This month's magazine was brought to you by the letter E and the number 3. Put them together and you've got the biggest games show in the world, populated this year by

me, a few members of my trusty team, loads of busty booth babes and hundreds and thousands of Americans.

It's the stuff of dreams (apart from the last entry) – every game you've ever dreamed of under one roof, with the likes of *Half-Life 2*, *Doom 3*, *Unreal Tournament 2004*, *Star Wars Galaxies* and *Rome: Total War* all screaming for your attention. I haven't experienced anything like it since I was ten, outside an amusement arcade in Criccieth with a pocketful of 10p pieces.

Highlight of the show? After listening to Korda going on and on and on about *Half-Life 2* since he was jetted over to play the game last month, I thought I'd had my fill. Guess what? I saw it running and almost died. For a game that's only a few months from release, it's head and shoulders above everything else around right now. Combine that with the rest of the line-up and it's the best list of PC games I've ever seen.

And what's more, we've mopped up every single one so that you don't have to (and believe me, a mix of sun, sea, sand, games, drink and partying isn't all it's cracked up to be) and split the results into two juicy halves. We've got the first part of our mammoth E3 round-up this issue, and you'll find the rest next month, along with an exclusive preview of one of the biggest sequels in the PC world and a guide to the dirty truth behind the glamour of the show. But I'm getting ahead of myself as usual. Enjoy this month's magazine and make sure you check out the two massive exclusive demos we've secured for the coverdiscs. See you next month.

Dave Woods
Editor



CALL OF DUTY P30

Exclusive, six page preview on the ultimate WWII shooter, from the creators of *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*



P64 First UK review of Shiny's blockbuster movie spin-off

COVER DISKS P128



■ 4 EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

Breed, *Unreal II: The Awakening*, *Day of Defeat V1.0* and *Tropico 2: Pirate Cove Updated Demo*
Eight more playable demos including...
Will Rock, *Red Shark*, *Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb*, *WWII: Frontline Command*, *Laser Squad Nemesis*, *Orbz v2.0*, *AirStrike 3D: Operation W.A.T.* and *Rosso Rabbit in Trouble*

■ DVD EXCLUSIVE: DVD ZONE

3 demos not on the CDs, including *X Plane 6*, *Uplink* and *Star Wraith 3*. All the featured mods in *ModWatch*. New patches for *Age of Mythology*, *Championship Manager 4*, *Delta*

Force: Black Hawk Down, *Divine Divinity*, *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*, *Master Of Orion III*, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance*, *Praetorians*, *Raven Shield*, *SimCity 4*, *Splinter Cell*, *Unreal Tournament 2003* and *Virtual Pool 3*.
Exclusive DVD-Video of *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, *Space Colony* and *Railroad Tycoon 3*.
Plus all the other latest and essential patches, movies and more.
Also exclusive to our DVD are DVD Zone Screenshot Packs, Wallpaper Packs, Essential Programs, Essential Drivers for graphics cards and Essential Patches including archived patches from all the biggest PC titles.



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WIN!

TINY COMPO Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (130), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing Date: June 26, 2003. The winner of our March cover (128) is G Easton of Solihull. Well done. The correct answer was Crockett and Tubbs.

**FIRST
Look!**

Blessed be the...



TRINITY

The chaps who did *Wolfenstein* are back on a high-tech rampage...

■ **BIO-DEGRADED** Anthony Holden

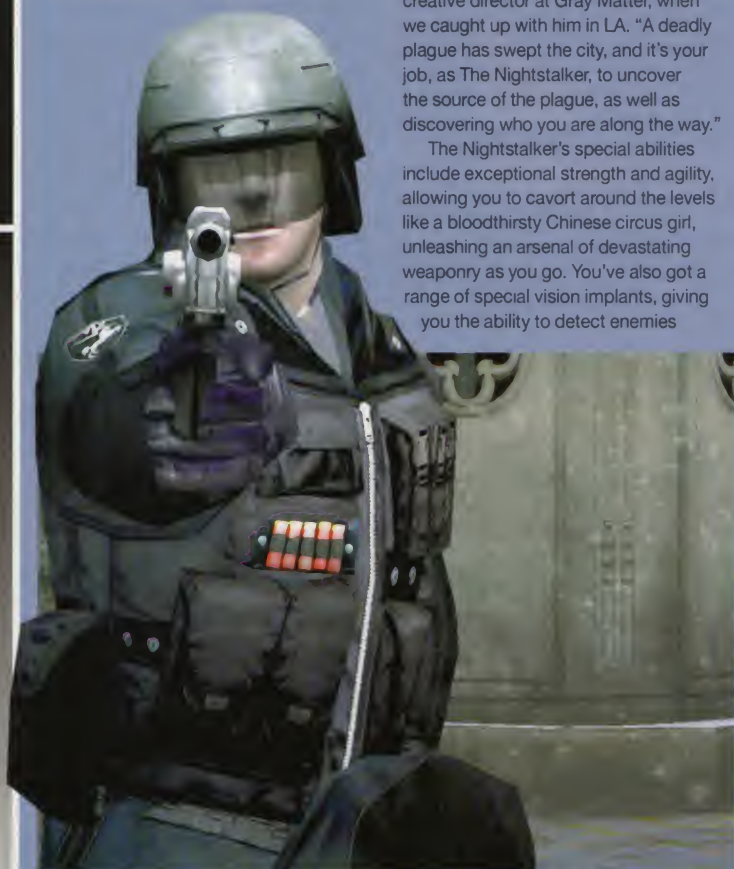
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Gray Matter
PUBLISHER Activision
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2004
WEBSITE www.gmistudios.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Cool new futuristic FPS from the makers of *Wolfenstein*
- Super-powerful bio-enhanced hero with loads of tricks up his sleeve
- *Max Payne*-style time bending effects
- Highly aware enemies with multiple response modes

"A deadly plague has swept the city and it's your job, as The Nightstalker, to uncover the source of it"



The slo-mo flash-time mode will look something like this, except not this slow.

FPS VETERANS Gray Matter joined the E3 madness this May, unveiling their latest first-person action-fest, *Trinity*. With a history of creating highly enjoyable (if not earth-shattering) gun-based romps, these are the lads who brought us such unsavoury delights as *Kingpin*, *Redneck Rampage* and of course, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* (the single-player bits anyway). Despite such credentials, we feel safe in saying that *Trinity* is their most ambitious and distinctive shooter to date.

Borrowing heavily from classic sci-fi sources such as *The Matrix*, Gibson, Alfred Bester, and the *Spawn* comic, the game introduces us to a darkly intriguing superhero, The Nightstalker. Mysteriously unaware of his own origins, The Nightstalker is a superhuman vigilante gifted with a host of bio-augmentations, each of which delivers a number of cool feats and abilities.

Of course, every superhero needs a city to protect, and for The Nightstalker it's New Orleans, the Big Easy, circa 2013. "The game begins with New Orleans and the surrounding area under quarantine and martial law," explains Drew Markham, creative director at Gray Matter, when we caught up with him in LA. "A deadly plague has swept the city, and it's your job, as The Nightstalker, to uncover the source of the plague, as well as discovering who you are along the way."

The Nightstalker's special abilities include exceptional strength and agility, allowing you to cavort around the levels like a bloodthirsty Chinese circus girl, unleashing an arsenal of devastating weaponry as you go. You've also got a range of special vision implants, giving you the ability to detect enemies



Trinity will be a strictly single-player-only affair, we're sorry to report.

through walls, identify structural weaknesses in buildings, and presumably find the lucky 20 quid in crisp packets.

What's more, you'll also be in possession of a "mysterious new technology" called Flash-Time. For this read "*Max Payne*-style slow-motion effect", though there is a slight twist on the Bullet-Time of yore, as rather than simply slowing time uniformly, your character moves substantially faster than the rest of the enemies when Flash-Time is engaged. "There are also special moves that combine flash-time with the player's bio-augmented physical moves," adds Drew, "giving The Nightstalker a wide range of tactical options."

You'll also receive regular support from a shadowy figure known only as

The Caretaker. Popping up in video feeds to your HUD, the Caretaker is an Otacon-type hacker/overseer, who can give you heads-up info, guidance and instructions. "The Caretaker is jacked-in to virtually everything," explains Drew. "Using The Nightstalker as a conduit, he can hack into computer systems, eavesdrop on phone calls and beat a variety of security and surveillance systems."

While we could vilify *Trinity* for ripping many of its ideas from *Max Payne*, *Deus Ex*, and other genre favourites, the fact is that conventions such as slow motion and cyberpunk bio-implants are simply here to stay. It seems pretty clear that *Trinity* has more to offer than just a rehash of past gaming experiences, so we say bring on the bio-enhanced slo-mo action. **PC**



Some enemies are affected by a specific type of weapon, so choose wisely.



While The Nightstalker is a prodigious badass, the enemies will eventually develop counter-measures to disrupt your bio-abilities.

TECHNOLOGY

While certainly no *Half-Life 2*, *Trinity*'s environments are looking rather lovely, courtesy of an enhanced *Wolfenstein* engine (itself based on *Q3A*) chugging under the hood.

ENEMIES

Building on the AI from *RTCW*, the enemies will be endowed with high situational awareness, translating into many different states of behaviour, including complete panic.

WEAPONS

Rather than having an infinite gun capacity, you'll have five 'hard points' where you can carry weapons. Each point is class-based, so you can't, say, put a rocket launcher in a pistol slot.



BIO ENHANCEMENTS

As well as letting you bend time and do super kicks and jumps, your biomods will automatically identify hostile forces for you - even through walls.

PICK-UPS

Look carefully. There are none! Rather than the traditional floating health kits, you'll heal yourself using internal 'stem cells'. Their effect is not instant though, and you'll be vulnerable while healing, so find a shady spot before you start stem-pumping.

HIT POINTS

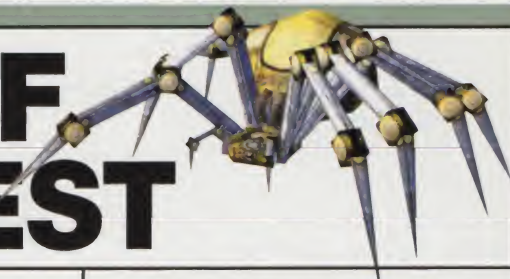
Against FPS convention, the developers have given *The Nightstalker* a starting health of 175 points, to help convey that superhuman feeling.

**FIRST
Look!**

Playing With Yourself

2003
expo
PART ONE

LORDS OF EVERQUEST



Solo strategising in the land of fantasy MMOs

■ NORRATH SPOKESPERSON Scott Steinberg

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Rapid Eye Entertainment
PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE October
WEBSITE lordsofneverquest.station.sony.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- An RTS from the company that perfected MMOs
- The *EverQuest* series' first spin-off
- Single and multiplayer games
- Units level-up and continue between levels
- Intensely intricate combat model



NEVER MIND the Dungeon & Dragons fanatics... according to Sony Online, they're expendable. At odds with the wildly popular game that inspired it, you don't have to put up with a single one's whining about ten-sided die in the real-time strategy game *Lords Of EverQuest*, the first solo-orientated title in the series. Well, assuming the six multiplayer levels that accommodate upwards of a dozen individuals don't tempt you.

Sidle up then, and let uncle *PC ZONE* spin you a tale of the Lost Age, 10,000 years back from the current *EverQuest* timeline. It seems rogue god Rallos Zek couldn't play nice, sending armies of giants, ogres and goblins out to Norrath. However, he forgot something during the careful planning, namely, an entire pantheon of pissed off deities, who soundly defeated the upstart and cursed his armies with stupidity.

Now, scant seasons later, 15 lords whose allegiances are split between three factions search for an artifact lost in the ensuing chaos. While searching for this tome, said to possess the ability to grant its bearer divine powers, they'll do battle against each another in spectacularly brutal fashion. Embarking upon a remarkable exercise in real-time strategy as one of these individuals, you'll find a hard road lies ahead.

Unless, of course, you happen to be a *Warcraft III* fan. "We welcome comparisons to Blizzard's ten-ton gorilla," suggests producer James Parker. "The game sold what, a million copies?" It's obvious to us that *Lords Of EverQuest* does play like the current champion of strategic desktop conquests, with



Units gather for battle around a spawning site.



Studio cutbacks took a terrifying toll on Verne "Mini-Me" Troyer.



An illegal orc rave is broken up by skeletons.

players encountering numerous NPCs and story-driven sequences throughout a 36-mission campaign.

Where the games differ though is in scope. The current title sports not only hundreds of collectible items, units that grow in experience and carry over between scenarios, but truly immense levels as well. "Take the largest map in *Age Of Mythology*, *Warcraft III* and *Command & Conquer: Generals*," suggests Parker. "Add 'em up and you still don't have the size of our biggest corker."

A good point, but one that may be moot; given the intricate rules governing combat, your forces could easily be wiped out long before crossing each landscape. All's fair in a scenario where little details such as killing mounted

riders or dispatching of the beasts which carry them separately from one another are taken into utmost consideration.

And that's before an armchair general can even consider troop types like the Clockwork Spider or Recruiter, who can convert neutral buildings into fully operational unit production facilities.

Still, the prospect of a solo *EverQuest* might rub some the wrong way. Not to fear, says Parker. "This isn't a game for fans of the original, but rather the 14 million or so RTS fans out there. We couldn't care less if they've ever been online... and why should it matter?" Maybe so, but if the company can't make good on its promises, we know several hundred thousand gamers who'd beg to differ. We'll have more on *Lords Of EverQuest* very soon. **EW**



Lords Of EverQuest in full swing – a lovely place to visit, but we wouldn't want to live there.

UNIQUE EQUIPMENT

Note the hammer being held aloft – it's just one of several hundred items your forces can stumble across.

EXPERIENCE

Keep units alive for the duration of an entire conflict, and you'll be able to bring them along on future campaigns.

COMMON GROUND

War rages across recognisable environments, ranging from Neriak and the Lavastorm Mountains to the Lost Ruins of Highhold Pass.

FAMILIAR FACES

Skeletons, gnolls, spiders and more vicious creatures will frequently appear as NPCs... sometimes with fatal results.

LAVISH EFFECTS

Flames and other spell effects gleefully dance and crackle across the landscapes in hi-res 3D when battles get going.

LORDS

Standing tall atop the battlefield, your champions wade proudly into combat, exerting a positive influence on all around them.



ALL THE NEWS, VIEWS AND RUMOURS FROM THE WORLD OF PC GAMING

BULLETIN

BEST IN SHOW



■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jamie Sefton

▲ It's E3 time again and I'm more excited about this year's videogames extravaganza than ever. Saying that, I'm inevitably going to have to avoid teeming crowds of rotund burger-chomping Americans, and grit my teeth as inane journalists ask questions in press conferences about the "10,000 polygon count per tree in the game's engine".

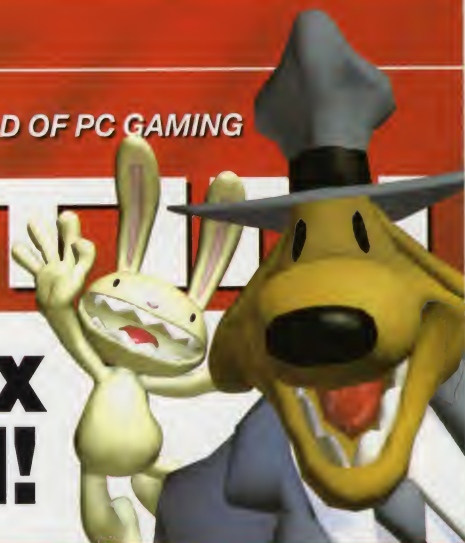
But what PC gamer wouldn't be thrilled? Look at this list of games on show and tell me you wouldn't be drooling all over the stands waiting to play them: *Half-Life 2*, *Doom III*, *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, *Rome: Total War*, *Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy*, *Black & White II*, *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Halo*.

All this – and the games that will be shown exclusively to PC ZONE behind-closed-doors – is worth the nightmarish 10-hour flight to Los Angeles, the terrible asthma-inducing smog, and having to share a room with Steve Hill for a week. Shudder.

In Bulletin this month we have many of the exclusives first, starting on this page with LucasArts' E3 line-up including the new *Sam & Max* adventure. We also have the first screenshots from *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault – Breakthrough* and *Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword* (page 13), *FIFA 2004* (page 22), news on *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* (page 14), a hands-on play of monk-shooting blaster *Painkiller* (page 15) and more snippets on Peter Molyneux's latest project *The Movies* (page 20). Plus, we've a special report on the next-generation of flight sims (page 16), old-skool fun and japes in *Emulation Zone* (page 19) and head-turning visuals from violent FPS *Breed* (page 26). Enjoy.



Sam & Max unleashed!



EXCLUSIVE DETAILS ON LUCASARTS' PC GAME LINE-UP FOR 2003/2004



Larry Holland's secret weapon for PC.



Knights of the Old Republic. Sparkly.



Ben orders a Cinzano and lemonade.

EVERY DOG and rabbit-thing has its day, and E3 was when LucasArts unveiled its full PC game line-up – including the eagerly-awaited adventure sequel *Sam & Max II*. The exclusive renders above have been taken straight from the forthcoming PC game starring the crazy crime-fighting duo – Sam is a dry, laconic hat-wearing dog detective, while Max is his insane, hyper-energetic rabbit sidekick.

The tongue-in-cheek adventure again takes place all over a semi-mythical wacky USA, taking in such environments as a high school gym dance on St Livia's Day and a snowy amusement park called the Colpax Pavilion, containing a rather run-down Santa's Village.

EASY RIDER

Another LucasArts adventure making a re-appearance is *Full Throttle: Hell On Wheels*. Featuring more action-sequences than the last game, the hero Ben has to get on his bike and save the local town from a mystery adversary who wants to destroy it for oil.

"In the original game, it was a very 'pick the right item and click at the right time' sort of thing, in a more traditional adventure game sense," said the game's director, Sean Clark. "*Hell on Wheels* is more of a console game in terms of its controls and feel. The fun part is the combat." Ben can join in fist-fights against rival biker gangs, pick up and throw objects such as tyre irons, as well as ride his Corley motorbike in intense action sequences à la *Road Rash*.

Next up is Lawrence 'X-Wing' Holland's next Totally Games project – a follow-up to the classic 1991 combat flight sim *Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe*. In *Secret Weapons Over Normandy* you take to the skies in more than 20 realistically-modelled WWII aircraft such as the P-51 Mustang and the B-17 Flying Fortress. You'll fly over 30 missions in theatres of war such as the

Pacific, North Africa, and Europe – including the famous Battle of Britain.

LucasArts' three new upcoming *Star Wars* titles – BioWare's *Knights Of The Old Republic*, Raven's *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy* and SOE's *Galaxies* – are all scheduled for release this year. *Knights of the Old Republic* is a role-playing action adventure set 4,000 years before the current *Star Wars* movies, and centres around the eternal battle between the Jedi and the Sith.

Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy moves away from traditional 3D shooters, having more third-person lightsaber battles and new Force Powers that you can combine. Also, that most risible of playable characters, Kyle Katarn, has been replaced by a system that allows you to create your own Jedi master, selecting the race, gender, clothing

and facial features. You can even specify the type of lightsaber you want, evolving your weapon as you progress.

Finally, *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*, will be a complete online universe, working in a similar way to *EverQuest*, except you'll be able to planet-hop, interact and team-up with other Jedis and *Star Wars* creatures and, eventually, enjoy multiplayer space combat.

LucasArts' other major title is *Armed & Dangerous*, a third-person action game with silly humour – you can read all about it in our big E3 preview special on page 48.

There's no doubt that with this line-up, LucasArts has its strongest portfolio of PC titles for years, which can only spell good news for us all. We'll keep you fully briefed on all these potential belters in future issues of this here ZONE.

BY GEORGE!

THE LUCASARTS GAMES HEADING TO YOUR PC IN 2003/2004.
ALL TITLES WILL BE PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION



Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic
ETA: Winter 2003



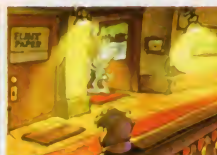
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy
ETA: Q4 2003



Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided
ETA Q4 2003



Full Throttle: Hell on Wheels
ETA: Q4 2003



Sam & Max II
ETA: 2004



Secret Weapons Over Normandy
ETA: 2004



FAR CRY
Crytek's island of death



SPECIAL REPORT
Next-generation flight sims



TRIBES: VENGEANCE
The return of the multiplayer FPS



PC ZONE CHARTS
Latest charts and release dates

Big Bazookas

EXCLUSIVE SCREENSHOTS FROM EA'S NEW MEDAL OF HONOR EXPANSION PACK, *BREAKTHROUGH*

AS REVEALED in PC ZONE

issue 128, Electronic Arts is to release another expansion pack for *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* later this year. *Breakthrough* sees you as Sergeant John Baker taking on the Nazis in such WWII battlegrounds as the Kasserine Pass in North Africa, Messina in Sicily and Monte Battaglia in Italy.

You'll be accompanied on certain missions by teams of AI-controlled squad mates, and will be able to arm yourself with a host of new weapons, including a particularly powerful-looking new shoulder-mounted bazooka.

Multiplayer games – which are promised to be backwards-compatible with the *Spearhead* add-on – now include a Liberation mode, where defeated players have to be saved and rescued by remaining team-mates so missions can be completed. You'll also be able to clamber in and drive tanks, employ minesweeping teams in certain areas, and ask for air strikes to obliterate especially tough enemy positions. Expect more essential news on this and the full *Medal Of Honor* sequel, *Pacific Assault*, in PC ZONE soon...



■ **Publisher:** Electronic Arts
■ **Developer:** EALA
■ **ETA:** Q4 2003
■ **Website:** www.ea.com



You can drive tanks and plough Nazis into the ground.

CLANCY BOYS

RAINBOW SIX 3 EXPANSION *ATHENA SWORD* TO STORM THE PC THIS SUMMER!

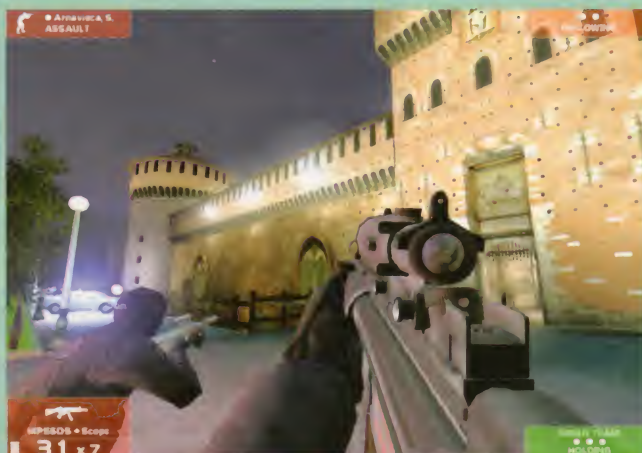
UBI SOFT'S *Rainbow Six* series is about to have another addition to its squad of counter-terrorist tactical shooters. *Athena Sword* sends the lethal firepower of the elite *Rainbow Six* operatives into the sunny climes of the Mediterranean to track down and destroy a dangerous international terrorist group.

A total of eight spanning new missions will involve tactical stealth and shooting action in Italy, Croatia and

Greece, with an additional seven real-world weapons bringing the grand total of lethal technology to 64.

Athena Sword will also have five new multiplayer levels set in environments such as a ferry boat and a chemical factory, plus three new game modes, including the bizarre-sounding *Adversarial Scattered Hunt*. From these screenshots you can see that the graphics engine has also been tweaked to the max for the new expansion – stay tuned for a bigger preview next issue.

■ **Publisher:** Ubi Soft
■ **Developer:** Red Storm Ent
■ **ETA:** 2003
■ **Website:** www.ubi.com



Sound effects apparently come from the team behind *The Matrix*.

SHORTS

UT 2004
CONFIRMED!

PC gamers can now expect a yearly update to the *Unreal Tournament* series, with the confirmation of *UT 2004* at E3. Infogrames (now Atari) has announced the new first-person shooter arena title will be compatible with *UT 2003*, so mod makers won't have to worry about starting again with new code.

EVIL ELIXIR



Demis Hassabis and his Elixir development company – currently finishing off RTS epic *Republic: The Revolution* – have revealed details of their next project. *Evil Genius* is a Sims-style strategy game set in the 1960s where you play a megalomaniac bent on world domination. Competing against other mad scientists, you have to manage resources and make sure you've enough power for the ultimate doomsday machine.

MAJESTIC MAJESCO



Majesco, US developer and publisher of *BloodRayne* (reviewed on page 86) has announced more PC titles that will again be published by VU Games in the UK. *Black9* is a futuristic third-person RPG adventure, *BlowOut* is an arcade-style full-on blaster set on an alien-infested space station, *Drake* is a cel-shaded third-person dual-pistol action game and *Advent Rising* is the first in a trilogy of sci-fi adventures. All will be revealed next issue – check out www.majesco.com for updated info.

NORTHERN
EXPOSURE

GMX Media will be publishing the RTS game *Northland* in July. The Funatics-developed title tells the story of a Viking God Loki who is banished to Earth after a fallout with boss deity Odin. It features 24 single-player missions and six multiplayer maps, as well as a map editor for creating your own worlds. Go to www.gmxmedia.net/northland for further details.

FANTASY ISLAND

EXCLUSIVE! CRYTEK'S GORGEOUS BLASTER FAR CRY

PC ZONE LAST landed on the shores of the island paradise battleground of *Far Cry* back in issue 126, so we decided to catch up with Matthieu Boulard, the Ubi Soft producer on the game, to find out more about the impressive AI, weapons and vehicles.

"Long-range gameplay sections are numerous in *Far Cry*," says Boulard. "Hold your breath and make very long distance sniping with the AW50 rifle, use the mortar and its ballistic game system to spread maximum destruction, or finally revisit classic weapons like the rocket launcher."

Far Cry is a smart-looking first-person shooter set on a tropical island inhabited by an insane scientist who is

genetically engineering all kinds of bizarre creatures to wipe out mankind. As action hero Jack Carver, you have to wade in and rescue sexy journalist Valerie Locklin from the clutches of the megalomaniac, simultaneously obliterating waves of intelligent tooled-up enemies on the way.

However, in addition to the large amounts of armaments available, Jack Carver will also be able to use the many vehicles littered about the jungle hideaway. "You can't actually pilot a helicopter, but you'll be able to paraglide, which is quite a refreshing experience," continues Boulard. "You can also drive two different cars and two boat models, each with advanced physics for extreme racing sequences, while keeping the possibility to shoot at opponents."

So with a few months left until *Far Cry*'s completion, what impresses Boulard the most about Crytek's 3D blaster? "Any group AI fighting sequence still amazes me," he says. "But I'm also a great fan of all the extreme sport-gameplay we have, especially those involving an ultra-realistic vertigo feeling." Watch this space for a more in-depth look at *Far Cry* before the game's September release.

■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Developer: Crytek
■ ETA: September ■ Website: www.crytek.com



Enemies can run, hide, shoot and call for help.



Crytek will also include a complex level-editor.



Always shoot for the goat beard.



BLOOD LUST

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – BLOODLINES BITES BACK

POPULAR ROLE-PLAYING

PC adventure *Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption* is to receive a sequel next year that will be one of the first titles to license Valve's impressive *Half-Life 2* graphics technology.

Developed by Troika Games (responsible for *Fallout*) *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* will use the highly-prized new Source graphics engine to plunge you into the blood-sucking world of modern

Los Angeles as a creature of the night from one of seven unique vampire clans.

As in the original game – that received 90 per cent and a **PC ZONE** Classic award in issue 92 – you can build up your undead character's powers and skills, such as mind control, in any way you like through experience points, to create your own dream (nightmarish?) neck-biter.

Bloodlines will mix traditional role-playing elements with first-

person shooting, so expect a punishing armoury of weaponry including flamethrowers, sniper rifles and stake guns for the instant impaling of human hunters, werewolves, monsters and enemy vampires. We'll have more info next month.

■ Publisher: Activision
■ Developer: Troika
■ ETA: 2004
■ Website: www.troikagames.com

Better than life?

EXCLUSIVE! THE FIRST SCREENSHOTS FROM WILL WRIGHT'S *THE SIMS 2* UNVEILED



It looks like a good fight, but where's the jelly pit?

WILL WRIGHT HAS finally unveiled his plans for the next generation of his multi-million selling *Sims* franchise. The *Sims 2* will feature a completely re-vamped 3D graphics engine for more realistic body and facial animation, and for the first time, allow you to follow a Sim through their entire life, with the ability to pass on DNA, so offspring will have similar physical and personality traits.

As you follow your Sim through their virtual existence, you will now get a "Life Score" to measure your little fellow's success – so we reckon you have a significant amount of points deducted if your Sim becomes an estate agent.

Also brand new is a create-a-Sim feature for custom-designing your Sims fizzle in detail, and bigger houses so that now you can expand above two storeys



Go on, give the baby a nice beer.



Sim DNA can be passed down to kids.

to store all the extra furniture and mod-cons available in the game. Check out the screens and look forward to *The Sims 2* and all the add-on packs dominating the PC charts for the next couple of years...

- **Publisher:** Electronic Arts
- **Developer:** Maxis
- **ETA:** TBA
- **Website:** www.thesims.com



"I think the question isn't for me. Terrorists do not fly WWII aircraft. They fly planes like Boeing. They're absolutely different things."

IL-2 Sturmovik's creator Oleg Maddox on whether the 9/11 terrorist atrocities affected people's perception of flight sims.

"I've seen the reaction of people who've seen the vehicles for the first time and even the most jaded and hardened veterans of the gaming world are blown away by them."

Armando Marini, creative lead at Digital Illusions on the "Rocketeer"-style jet packs in the forthcoming *Battlefield 1942* expansion pack *Secret Weapons of WWII*.

"What we have decided to do, following a very precise strategy, effectively is to adopt this brand Atari."

Bruno Bonnell in an interview with Reuters, after dumping his company name Infogrames in favour of Nolan Bushnell's old brand. Does this mean there'll soon be millions of copies of Enter The Matrix buried in the Nevada desert?

HELL ON EARTH

HANDS-ON WITH PEOPLE CAN FLY'S VIOLENT HORROR SHOOTER *PAINKILLER*



Collect 100 souls to morph into a hell monster.



Havok physics mean you can blast objects too.



A stakegun weapon will nail enemies to walls. Nasty.

IF YOU'RE TIRING of sneaking around stealthy environments and just want a taste of good old fashioned bullet-spraying mayhem, then you should be interested in *Painkiller*. Developed in Poland by People Can Fly, *Painkiller* involves no-bull, balls-to-the-walls single and multiplayer blasting, set in various atmospheric, gothic environments, packed with unholy adversaries.

"We want players to scream "Yeah baby!" and "Wow" every time

they frag an enemy," says project leader Adrian Chmielarz. "We want *Painkiller* to be the most spectacular action-orientated shooter, not the most realistic."

On the early level we played, the mercenary-for-hire *Painkiller* was set loose in a huge cathedral armed with one of the game's five "combo weapons" – a heavy machine-gun with grenades as secondary fire. Hordes of hellish hooded monks and grinning, sharp-toothed priest-beasts

descended on us, which we dispatched with grenades, sending their bodies spinning and slapping against walls – the Havok-based ragdoll physics in full effect.

"I love the interaction between the enemies and our world. It's like directing your own Hong Kong action movie," continues Chmielarz. "There's also no repetition. Every single level is unique and monsters are not just a bunch of different 3D models – they behave differently and

will have unique attacks." Also worthy of note is the fact that once you've collected the souls of 100 departed baddies, you can morph into a demonic killing machine that shreds anyone or anything into their component molecules. Look out for the playable demo soon.

- **Publisher:** Dreamcatcher
- **Developer:** People Can Fly
- **ETA:** Q3 2003
- **Website:** www.peoplecanfly.com

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

PHOTOGRAPHIC SCENERY IN FLIGHT SIMS COULD BE SIGNALLING THE START OF A TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION IN PC GAMING. PAVEL BARTER TAKES TO THE SKIES...

SPECIAL REPORT

A PILOT'S VIEW of land from 5,000ft is spectacular – excluding, of course, the presence of dense cloud or chronic vertigo. The anthill towns, rug forests and bathtub lakes below are visual markers to navigate by, and airfield runways provide discernible signs for landing. Look closely from this height and you can pinpoint shopping centres, rivers, streets and even your own home. All this is possible with six months of training, a pilot's license and a light aircraft. It's also possible with your PC.

The emergence of photographic scenery in flight sims is a leap forward in closing the gap between games and professional instruction simulators. "Photo-realism in PC simulations is an excellent idea, particularly if it's up to date with maps and charts," says Martin Robinson, CEO of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association UK. "Navigating by virtue of ground features is a legal requirement for pilots. We have GPS [satellite positioning], but that's only an aide to back up visual navigation."

VFR Photographic Scenery, a software add-on for *Microsoft Flight Simulator*

2002, has mapped the entire length and breadth of the country, creating a virtual UK: the real world beneath your unreal wings. Every scrap of terrain is detailed, including airports, farm strips and heliports. Even WWII airfields, no longer in use but still visible from the air, can be accessed.

According to Paul Chaney from Getmapping, who pieced together this picture-perfect world with aerial photos, "the pilot can interact with the photographic scenery in much the same way as he or she would expect if flying in real life. It's possible to take off from and land on the photography, even crash into mountains... We draped the layer of photography over a terrain model, much like a carpet over a lumpy floor."

BIG CHOPPERS

As well as entertaining desktop aviators, this VFR software is being used by helicopter instructors at RAF Shawbury. Trainee pilots take note of Visual Reporting Points (VRPs) in the simulated world and familiarise themselves with airport and

field approach patterns. "Suppose you were about to fly to a destination you hadn't been to before. You could practice travelling that course on your PC and get a feel for what you should be looking at en route," says Robinson.

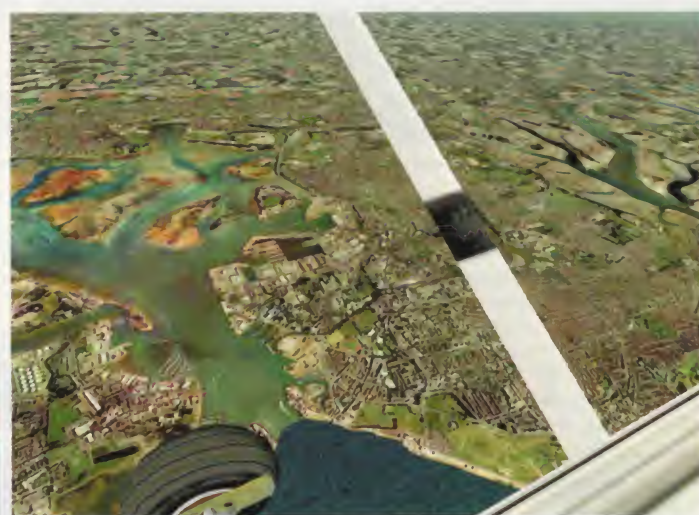
The quest for realism has always been high on flight games' agenda – 'civilian sim' favourites include *X-plane*, *Fly! II*, and the czar of sims, *Microsoft Flight Simulator*. Bill Gates has kept the latter product airborne for 20 years, selling around two million copies at a trot,

and *FS2002* will soon be succeeded by *FS2004*. Military sims include *Falcon 4.0*, *Combat Flight Simulator 2* and 3, *WWII Fighters* and *European Air War*.

Because of restrictions in technology and the refinement of other aspects of simulation, developers have tended to favour auto-generated scenery over photo-realism. However, "autogen" requires no less work, research or patience. Kuju Entertainment created the UK's Settle to Carlisle route in *Microsoft Train Simulator* by collecting ordnance



England's green and pleasant land. Sniff.



VFR Photographic Scenery – the only way to view crapholes like London.



IL-2 Sturmovik: Oleg Maddox's masterpiece.

survey maps, digital maps, and information describing the content of each square kilometre of land.

"We set up cameras in train cabs and passenger departments and filmed the entire route," says Julian Davis, Kuju's technical director. "Photos were taken of stations, buildings and rolling stock along the route, and we amassed GPS positional data from the train. We then created objects in 3D art packages that looked like the photos and built a world around all this information. Players can gaze from their train windows and see the model of a real world environment."

FLY THE WORLD WITH THESE ADD-ONS FOR MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

FANCY SEEING THE WORLD? MANY SIMS USE VISUAL FLIGHT RULES TO ACCUSTOM PILOTS TO VARIOUS LOCATIONS



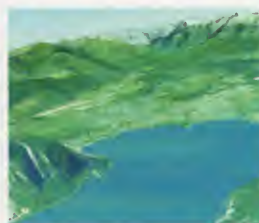
Cruise from Criciúma and Florianópolis during dusk in *Fly To Brazil*. PDF flight charts are available for reference.



GeoRender 2 scenery takes both wannabe and pro pilots to Utah's Bryce Canyon Airport, a famous landing strip dating back to 1936.



Budapest 2003 has aerial photo coverage of the city and a 60x60 kilometre area around it. Around 300,000 buildings are on show below for desktop tourists.



Spy on the rich in *Switzerland 3*, a title that provides a photo-realistic elevation model of the entire country – including all the airports and cuckoo clocks.



England and Wales are currently available on Just Flight's *VFR Photographic Scenery*. Scotland and Northern Ireland will be available in 2004.



MegaScenery flies over Los Angeles.

Geography is arguably less essential for trains than it is for air navigation. Replicating a picture of one field to depict many fields is a step down from using individual shots of each location. *MegaScenery USA 2004's* (for *MS Flight Sim 2002*) visual scenery is developed from satellite images at a resolution of 5m per pixel. *Real Azores* (again for *MS Flight Sim 2002*) uses photo-realistic buildings and runways to create a sense of reality in the skies over the Atlantic.

"In WWII sims it's more important to find old maps," says the creator of the superb



Can you spot PC ZONE at E3 below?

Concerned about the implications of acquiring data of military installations, prisons and potential terrorist targets, Getmapping contacted the relevant authorities and advised them of its intentions. According to Paul, the MoD reviewed images of strategically important sites (such as Buck House, Sterling Lines, etc) and were happy that they did not present a security risk. Photography

"With plans to capture images detailing everything in the UK down to 25cm, security of sensitive sites was a major consideration"

IL-2 Sturmovik, Oleg Maddox. "Believe it or not, there are great changes in locations and cities between that time and now. Satellite maps are helpful only in defining the highs of hills and mountains and precise configurations of geography such as sea borders."

FANATICAL FLIGHT SIMS?

However, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, when terrorists were rumoured to have trained with flight sims, could photo-realism be a potential threat to natural security?

"With plans to capture images detailing everything in the UK down to 25cm, security of sensitive sites was a major consideration," admits VFR's Paul Chaney. "It might be a surprise to learn that, legally, one can take aerial photography of any location in the UK so long as the aircraft is flying above a certain altitude. There are no laws about the amount of detail you can collect from above the altitude with a long focal length camera..."



Press all the buttons for fun.

covering every square inch of the UK was cleared for distribution.

Pedro Sousa, developer of *Real Azores*, was not so lucky: "Lajes AFB military apron and buildings are not modelled in detail in the game. Neither the Portuguese AF nor the USAF allowed us to photograph that part. I was taken to Lajes civil apron under airport police escort and they ensured that I did not point my camera towards the military apron."

Some simmers are sceptical about the viability of geo-specific scenery. Francois Dumas, managing editor of the SimFlight Network and a 20-year sim veteran, says, "Opinions are split between love and hate. The main problem is that a simulator is trying to capture every minute of reality. That means changing the location of the aircraft, but also lighting, seasons, ground cover, and so on. So far there is no way a photo could convey that, since it's a snapshot of one second in the time of a year."

But *MegaScenery 2004* has already begun incorporating lighting and seasonal effects into its software and possibilities for photographic scenery in other genres, although limited for the time being, may have a major impact on the future of all game environments.

"The technology currently isn't available that would allow us to use real-world landscapes," says Nival's Mike Allenson, developer of real-time strategy *Blitzkrieg*. "But somewhere down the line, as hardware gets more powerful and there are high-detail first-person shooters, we should be able to develop photo-realistic real-time strategy titles." [E]



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EMULATION ZONE

Breaking news from the world of emulation, with retro reanimator **Stuart Campbell**

THIS YEAR'S (AND EVERY YEAR'S) MODEL



Indianapolis 500: one of several Model 2 racers.



Zero Gunner protests against motorway overcharging.

The last ten years have been a struggle for arcade gaming. As home systems have become more competitive, the ranks of the arcade cabinets have thinned and the games have become increasingly homogenised. The up-side, from an emulation point of view at least, is that hardware has become far more standardised. Because nearly all coin-ops run on the same handful of technical systems (some of which have been around for more than a decade and are still used for new games today), the successful cracking of just one of those systems can have swift knock-on effects for related hardware. And so it is with *Nebula Model 2*. The original *Nebula* did a superb job of emulating the CPS-2 system, home of Capcom's endless series of 2D fighting games alongside many other titles. But the closely-related nature of arcade hardware has facilitated the relatively easy development of a spin-off emulator focused on a more recent series of games, most notably the "Model 2" line from Sega which gives the emu its name.

Model 2 (in its 2A, 2B and 2C revisions) was the system that ran some of Sega's most popular arcade titles,

including *The House Of The Dead*, *Virtua Striker*, *Sega Touring Car Championship*, the inventive shooter *Zero Gunner* and the obscure *Sonic The Hedgehog* fighting game, as well as non-Sega games like the first incarnation of Tecmo's infamous wobble-jugged beat 'em up *Dead Or Alive*. Despite the polygon-heavy sophistication of the games involved and the early stage of the emulator's development, it's already a highly impressive achievement.

If you have a meaty PC (2GHz or above) many of the games are – while not in full 60-frames-per-second glory yet – eminently playable with full sound, though the likes of *Sega Touring Car* still, at the time of writing, suffer from major chug. Of course, given the dizzying speed of the dynamic world of emulation, you can expect that situation to have improved by the time you read this. *Nebula Model 2* is one of emulation's best achievements, and the goal of playing arcade-perfect online *Daytona USA* just took a few giant leaps closer.

LINKS

nebula.emulatronia.com –
Nebula M2 homepage



Sonic and the aptly-named **Knuckles** exchange views.

WHAT IS EMULATION?



By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form.

The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) which you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can to the emulators themselves.

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

SEXY PARODIUS (KONAMI, ARCADE, 1996)



The one on the right appears to be called "Neal". Erk.

It's been said, more than once, and indeed more than once by Emulation Zone, that the Japanese are a strange bunch. But of all the many strange things about our chums from the East, undoubtedly the oddest is what they regard as sexy. Whether it's used-underwear vending machines or saucer-eyed teenage girls being horribly violated by slimy-tentacled space monsters, it all ensures that your normally-intrepid reporter stays firmly in his own hemisphere of the globe, limiting his interactions with Japan to playing its many splendid videogames. Sometimes, however, it's impossible to avoid the crossover, as this foray into the normally light-hearted *Parodius* series proves. Your correspondent is, perhaps thankfully, unable to read the storyline, but essentially the game follows the standard *Nemesis/Gradius*

template, with the exception that each level has a subsidiary task (for example, collecting a set number of golden coins while battling the enemies), which if completed rewards the player with a little cut-scene, invariably featuring semi-naked girls with animal tails engaged in some kind of incomprehensible behaviour with an octopus, or a green dolphin with a moustache. *Sexy Parodius* is a great game, inventive and fast-paced and exceptionally challenging, but Emulation Zone never, ever wants to visit a Japanese porn cinema.

LINKS

www.mame.net – Emulate
Sexy Parodius with MAME





LARA CROFT REDUCED A seaside town to terror when she wielded firearms in the car park of a Sussex supermarket. The fictional *Tomb Raider* star sparked a police alert in Portslade, near Brighton, after it was feared she might be staging an armed robbery of the local Tesco. Officers were called out and a police helicopter summoned when the game character was spotted clad in black PVC, wielding a brace of silver revolvers. Following the 999 call, the old bill sped to the scene, only to see Lara and a male accomplice fleeing in a black jeep, spookily recalling the action of the terrible film and over-rated series of games. An eagle-eyed witness noted the registration number of the getaway vehicle and grassed to the fuzz, who rapidly alerted armed response units. The jeep was traced to a house in Hove, where it was blatantly parked on the driveway while the owners sat inside possibly drinking some kind of hot beverage. Dressed in full body armour, police stormed the house, wherein they discovered Michelle Powell, 38, and her husband Bob, in an obvious state of surprise. The alleged 'Tesco Raiders' declared their innocence, claiming that Mrs Powell, still 38, is a part time Lara look-a-like and that they were merely taking publicity shots using a cheap homemade costume and a pair of toy guns from a pound shop. 38-year-old Mrs Powell seethed: "We were out taking some shots and it was actually very early in the morning on Easter Sunday so we just didn't think anybody would be around. I did not mean any malice or harm to anybody and I have done shots before and police have said it's fine." A police spokeswoman clarified: "If you are waving replica firearms around it does cause alarm and fear in people who see them. If you are doing any filming or anything like that, let police know." Sussex police said Mrs Powell, nearly 40, had been given "advice" about her behaviour. That advice may have been to grow up.

Finally, the hip-hop artist formerly known as Puff Daddy has stated his intent to create a game based, predictably, on himself, simulating his life as a music industry mogul. Marketing spoke: "This new game will have Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs' likeness in a top-of-the-line videogame, which will reach the elusive youth and urban markets." Word to your mama...

"If you are waving replica firearms around it does cause alarm and fear in people who see them"

Back to the Gulf

EXCLUSIVE! WE BRING YOU AN INTERVIEW WITH PIVOTAL ALONGSIDE THE LATEST SCREENSHOTS FROM THE SQUAD-BASED SHOOTER CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II

OK STOP. Before you start thinking this is a cynical attempt to cash in on recent events in Iraq, developer Pivotal wants to make it clear that the squad-based shooter *Conflict: Desert Storm II* is only concerned with the events of the last Gulf War in 1991. "It's not our intention to make a political statement," says director of technology, Alex McLean. "We just thought back in 2000 when we began the first *Conflict: Desert Storm*, that the WWII environment was over-saturated. The Gulf War gave us a chance of using a modern setting with recent technology."

McLean promises that *Desert Storm II* will expand on the achievements of the first title, with better graphics, AI and mission structure, with many improvements suggested from fans on forums. "Your troops are now much more intelligent and won't blow your cover in tight situations," continues McLean. "Also, the enemy AI has been hugely improved, so they'll look for you if they hear or see something, chase you, or run and get help."

Desert Storm II will have a stronger narrative to link the various missions, with "less expanses of desert and more fighting in urban areas," plus Pivotal is working on giving your fellow squad members more character and making sure you have to keep them alive to complete objectives. There'll be additional Allied and Iraqi weapons available, including nasty-sounding phosphor grenades that can be used to set people on fire. McLean adds: "With *Warzone 2100*, we never got a chance to do a sequel. Now we're able to genuinely do our new game more justice and include all our wish-list stuff."

- **Publisher:** SCI
- **Developer:** Pivotal
- **ETA:** September
- **Website:** www.pivotalgames.co.uk



You'll only have a short time to heal injured soldiers.



Conflict: Desert Storm II has more urban fights.



The Movies is Lionhead's ambitious Hollywood sim.



George Romero wannabes will love the horror setting.

Lights, camera, action!

NEW SCREENSHOTS RELEASED FROM LIONHEAD'S *THE MOVIES*

PC ZONE has secured the latest images from Peter Molyneux's film-making sim, *The Movies*. Lionhead's latest title will allow you to live out your fantasies as a Hollywood mogul, putting you in charge of a movie studio from the 1920s to the present day.

You'll have to come up with box office hit ideas, write scripts, build sets, recruit movie stars or even create your own Oscar-winning Nicole Kidman with

the game's powerful editor. Also, you'll be able to add your own soundtracks and dialogue and even post your finished movies on the Internet to swap with like-minded auteurs.

The screenshots show action from a 1960s/1970s zombie flick shoot, with make-up artists, actors, lighting bobs and cameramen all involved on-set. *The Movies'* main challenge is to make entertainment that audiences of the

time will love – so producing a *Star Wars* trilogy in the 1930s will probably just confuse the bejeezus out of your adoring public. Watch out for more showings of *The Movies* in a PC ZONE theatre near you soon...

- **Publisher:** Activision
- **Developer:** Lionhead Studios
- **ETA:** TBA
- **Website:** www.lionhead.com

HULK

UNLEASH THE FURY!

Following the events of the blockbuster Universal Pictures film, troubled scientist Dr. Bruce Banner and his alter ego, The Hulk, battle The Leader, a terrifying villain intent on unleashing a relentless army of gamma creatures.

The Incredible Hulk also available on Game Boy Advance™



24 fully destructible and interactive environments - if you can see it, you can smash it.



Battle notorious classic villains and massive new foes. Fight up to 10 enemies at once.



45 devastating attacks to dispose of your enemies.



Outsmart your enemies as Dr. Bruce Banner using stealth and disguise.

PLAY THE GAME - SEE THE MOVIE



PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Good Cop. Bad Cop

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A MONTH ON PC ZONE

GOOD COP

E3 – the biggest games show on the planet. *Half-Life 2* and *Thief III* anyone?

Jordan's home-made movie currently doing the rounds on the Interweb. Nice tattoo love...

Call Of Duty. The ex-Medal Of Honor developers Infinity Ward could have their first WWII shooter hit.

PC ZONE's Amsterdam trip. Don't ask. No really don't.

BAD COP

More deadline hell. Can we just have one normal three and a half week issue this year, please?

Editor Woods returning from a week's holiday in Egypt to discover he'd spent more than £1,000 on wine, women and novelty pyramids.

Sefton damaging his wrist in a real football match versus CVG magazine. Well, that's what he claims.

Still more than four months to wait for *Half-Life 2*. Can't... hold... on... much... longer...

Good Cop: Rick Deckard Bad Cop: Gaff (from *Blade Runner*) – sent in by Mike Wood, Essex. Send in your suggestions for Good Cop/Bad Cop to win a PC ZONE goodie-bag!

IT'S ALL KICKING OFF

SHOCK NEWS!
ELECTRONIC ARTS
UNVEILS FIFA 2004!

NOW THE FOOTBALL season has finished, us fans will desperately have to find something else to fill the void in our lives, such as *Championship Manager 4* or having a meaningful relationship with a partner. Games behemoth Electronic Arts has used this excruciating summer lull in the action to announce the latest in its FIFA football franchise.

FIFA 2004 will feature a revamped graphics engine, which will take advantage of the latest generation of 3D cards, as well as the usual slick presentation with all of the official top clubs from Europe including Real Madrid, AC Milan and (hawk, spit) Manchester Utd.

However, new for next season is a career mode that will give you the opportunity to take a lower division team and turn them into champions by signing new players and winning promotion. Achieving this without crippling the club with huge debts might be a good idea, so we would definitely avoid Leeds Utd at this present time. Have a gander at these exclusive screenshots and look forward to the autumn when FIFA 2004 will be released and the new season begins. Summer = overrated.

■ Publisher: EA
■ Developer: EA
■ ETA: September
■ Website: www.ea.com



FIFA 2004 will introduce a fully-fledged career mode.



PC footy competition is hotting up with Konami's ISS 3 arriving soon.

COMPETITION

Win Rise Of Nations!

10 COPIES OF MICROSOFT'S SUPERB HISTORICAL RTS GAME RISE OF NATIONS MUST BE WON!

"EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD," sang languid pop icons Tears For Fears sometime in the mid-1980s. Little did the mullet-headed stars know that years later, their clunky anthem would inspire the next generation of PC game coders to produce the stunning strategy epic *Rise Of Nations*. Er, probably.

Microsoft's *Rise Of Nations* received 90 per cent and a prestigious PC ZONE Classic award in our exclusive review last issue. Featuring revolutionary national borders, 18 playable ancient and modern cultures such as the Aztecs and the Chinese, 32 luxury resources and a fantastic campaign mode, *Rise Of Nations* is one of the most original and enthralling RTS titles for years.

Bill Gates has personally (without being involved directly) allowed Microsoft to give away 10 copies of this magnificent game and all you have to do for a chance to win one is answer the simple-minded question on the right, slap it on a postcard and send it to the PC ZONE address.



Microsoft

WHO DEVELOPED
RISE OF NATIONS?

- A: Big Huge Games
B: Small Tiny Games
C: Massive Fat Games

Send your answer on a postcard, along with with all of the information requested, to the address below:

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).

■ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.

■ Please indicate whether or not you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

Send your entry to:

Rise Of Nations competition,
PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland St, London
W1T 4JD. (Closing date: Thursday,
Jun 26, 2003).

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

TRIBAL GATHERING

IRRATIONAL GAMES UNLEASHES ITS SINGLE AND MULTIPLAYER SEQUEL **TRIBES: VENGEANCE**

THE POPULAR online multiplayer first-person shooter *Tribes* is to receive a third instalment early next year – with a single-player campaign. *Tribes: Vengeance* is being developed by Irrational Games – responsible for *System Shock 2* and *Freedom Force* – and will use the Unreal engine complete with ragdoll physics to hopefully produce a FPS with appeal for both newbies and the hardcore online following.

"Our plan is not only to enhance the multiplayer component of *Tribes*, but to also blow people away with a single-player story unlike anyone has ever seen in a videogame," hyped the general

manager of Irrational, Ken Levine. The single-player campaign, set in an endless war between two factions (the Empire and the Tribes) will put you in the role of various characters and classes spread over two different timelines in the Starsiege universe.

Irrational is hoping this will encourage gamers to learn the different roles in multiplayer, which will remain the main thrust of the *Tribes* franchise, with one of the leading developers in the game's community – Michael "KineticPoet" Johnston – in charge of the online component. *Vengeance* promises huge exteriors with more variety and detail,

plus "sports" orientated play styles that according to Levine will "deliver the multiplayer game the *Tribes* community has always wanted."

We'll keep our fingers crossed that Irrational maintains the integrity of the excellent multiplayer game (maybe level Katabatic?) while delivering a cool, accessible single-player FPS. More news soon.

■ **Publisher:** VU Games
 ■ **Developer:** Irrational Games
 ■ **ETA:** 2004
 ■ **Website:** www.irrationalgames.com



Tribes: Vengeance will have online multiplayer with more "sports arena" levels.

TOILET MONSTER!

KONAMI'S LATEST FOG-FILLED FEAR-FEST, **SILENT HILL 3** UNVEILED



Heather stumbles upon our office.



A descent into hell.



On PC you can save at any point.

SILENT HILL IS the Driller Killer of games. It's so deranged, so depraved and so completely horrific that it never should have been allowed. Which is why most of you will probably be licking your lips at the thought of another trip to the town of terror with the release of *Silent Hill 3* on PC this October.

Meeting producer Akira Yamaoka recently in London, *PC ZONE* got a sneak demo of the game. "You play Heather," he explains, "a typical teenage girl who finds herself in a nightmare. But unlike a film, this interaction in the story allows you to really feel the fear of her situation."

And a petrifying predicament it is too. Heather, new to the series, begins in a pleasant shopping mall. Before you know it, the mall's contented customers, department stores and shopping music have been replaced with hideous demons, gore-splattered abattoirs, and a cacophony of caterwauling tortured souls.

Other than the change of character, the formula seems to be intact – forboding locations illuminated only by the feeble glint of your pocket torch; creatures born of the imagination of a gibbering lunatic; brutal combat; cryptic puzzles.

Apart from showing off costumes and weapons, Yamaoka also revealed where some of the game's inspiration comes from. "In Japanese folklore there is a story of a monster who pulls children into toilets. This is why toilets appear frequently in *Silent Hill* games." And we thought it was because we were all shitting ourselves while playing...

■ **Publisher:** Konami
 ■ **Developer:** KCET
 ■ **ETA:** October
 ■ **Website:** www.konami-europe.com



Marian Susan
 Lead programmer, Ealdren

DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

What PC games are you playing at the moment?
Vietcong and *Splinter Cell*.

What was the last videogame you finished?

I nearly completed *Medal Of Honor*. But the last game I really finished was *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

What is your favourite game of all time?
 Definitely *The Terminator: Future Shock*.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I'm proud that I have finished my first game *Chaser*.

Who do you most admire in the industry and why?

John Carmack, because he is his own boss and he can make technology and game design according to his imaginations.

What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?

I think that graphics technology and multiplayer gaming are still the best on PC.

What is your company's philosophy?

To make great games in a fantastic working atmosphere.

What's the best thing about your job?

That my job is also my hobby.

What's the worst thing about your job?

Debugging game crashes.

What are you working on at the moment?

We are preparing code structure for our top secret next project...

What's the Next Big Thing in PC gaming?

I think maybe some kind of virtual reality – that would be crazy!

CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack

TOP 10



Championship Manager retains its winning league position at number one, despite a strong resurgence from those tiny tits *The Sims*. With the footie season over, *Champ Man* is all we need until August.



'Nam-based first-person shooter *Vietcong* invades the charts at number two. Despite its disappointing graphics, *Vietcong* still manages to provide varied missions and some intense jungle firefights – just play the Stones' *Paint It Black* for the full experience.

	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	– CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4	EIDOS	90%
2	NEW VIETCONG	TAKE 2	81%
3	▲ THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA	78%
4	▲ THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA	N/A
5	NEW FREELANCER	MICROSOFT	84%
6	▼ COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA	86%
7	▼ BLACK HAWK DOWN: DELTA FORCE	NOVALOGIC	52%
8	RE THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY	EA	62%
9	▼ SPLINTER CELL	UBI SOFT	94%
10	RE THE SIMS: HOT DATE	EA	71%



Microsoft's space shooting/trading sim comes out of hyperspace at number five this month. Some gamers have criticised the clichéd "Elite-beater" tag as being just hyperbole, but *Freelancer* is certainly one of the best of its genre out there.



Reading your comments on our Interweb forum, it seems you **ZONERS** just love *The Sims* and can't wait for more of the little fellows to fill up the charts. For news on the next generation of Will Wright's huge franchise, turn to page 15.

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

This month I've decided to write a song about the top ten: "When I'm feeling doooowwn I look at the top ten, It makes me feeeeee waaaaarm and fuzzy wuzzy inslllllde!"
SLOTH82

Vietcong is good(ish) but a bit scripted. Glad *Splinter Cell* is still in the top ten. *Postal 2* should be just 'cos of the size of the developer's nads.
Bossanova29

I gave up doing chart comments aaaaaaaages ago! I got in the mag once. I've tried many times since. I've failed. I'll give it one more go though. Oh, I've forgotten the charts – back in a sec.
Gangster15



TOP 10

1	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4	EIDOS
2	TROPICO 2: PIRATE COVE	TAKE 2
3	FREELANCER	MICROSOFT
4	VIETCONG	TAKE 2
5	WWII: FRONTLINE COMMAND	KOCH
6	RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD	UBI SOFT
7	COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA
8	SPLINTER CELL	UBI SOFT
9	SIM CITY 4	EA
10	THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA

COMPETITION



Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, **PC ZONE** and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following:

QUESTION: What was the name of the famous pirate in Treasure Island?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ07A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: June 26, 2003

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to **PC ZONE**.

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

JUNE

CHASER	JOWOOD
CYCLING MANAGER 3	GMX MEDIA
INDYCAR SERIES	CODEMASTERS
LOTUS CHALLENGE	XICAT
MIDNIGHT CLUB II	ROCKSTAR
RESTAURANT TYCOON	PHANTAGRAPH
STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II	ACTIVISION
THE HULK	VU GAMES
WILL ROCK	UBI SOFT
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2003	CODEMASTERS
WORLD RACING	TDK

JULY

CAPTAIN SCARLET AND THE MYSTERONS	DIGITAL WORKSHOP
CHARM OF WAR	OXYGEN
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3	CODEMASTERS
COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN	EIDOS
FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004	MICROSOFT
MOON TYCOON	GMX MEDIA
NORTHLAND	GMX MEDIA
STARSKY & HUTCH	EMPIRE
WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE	VU GAMES

AUGUST

BREED	CDV
SACRED	ASCARON
THE GREAT ESCAPE	SCI
TRON 2.0	DISNEY

SEPTEMBER

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: THE TITANS	MICROSOFT
APOCALYPTICA	KONAMI
CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II	SCI
CRUSADERS - BATTLE FOR OUTREMER	WANADOO
DUALITY	PHANTAGRAPH
FAR CRY	UBI SOFT
FIFA 2004	EA
FIRE WARRIOR	THQ
FREEDOM: SOLDIERS OF LIBERTY	EA
GALAXY ANDROMEDA	CDV
GREYHAWK	INFOGRAMES
HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
PAINKILLER	DREAMCATCHER
PSYCHOTOXIC	CDV
SILENT HILL 3	KONAMI
SOLDNER - SECRET WARS	JOWOOD
THE SIMS ONLINE	EA
VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG	EMPIRE
XIII	SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

AGE OF WONDERS: SHADOW MAGIC	TAKE 2
BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII	EA
BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON	THQ
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	EIDOS
JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY	ACTIVISION
MEDAL OF HONOR: AA - BREAKTHROUGH	EA
POP IDOL	CODEMASTERS
SACRED	ASCARON
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: TROTK	EA

NOVEMBER

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD	ACTIVISION
GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
HALO	MICROSOFT
HOMEWORLD 2	VU GAMES
JUDGE DREDD VS JUDGE DEATH	VU GAMES
PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	UBI SOFT
STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED	SOE
STAR WARS: KOTOR	ACTIVISION
TEMPLAR	TDK
WORMS 3	SEGA

DECEMBER

FULL THROTTLE: HELL ON WHEELS	ACTIVISION
HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	EA
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2	TAKE 2
MORTYR 2	TBA
SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY	ACTIVISION
SPACE COLONY	TAKE 2

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

THE SMART MARTIAL arts flick *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was originally going to be turned into a third-person action game for console and PC. Now it seems certain ninjas have gone into hiding, with the PC game slipping off the radar completely.

- Publisher: Ubi Soft
- Developer: Ubi Soft
- ETA: TBA
- Website: www.ubi.com



COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO



DUE FOR REVIEW this issue, the official stand-alone version of the most popular online shooter in the world has been delayed. Currently being developed by Ritual, hopefully we'll have the full review of the squad-based FPS next issue - hold your finger on the trigger for now...

- Publisher: VU Games
- Developer: Ritual/Gearbox
- ETA: Summer
- Website: www.cs-conditionzero.com

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER 3

KONAMI'S FIRST FOOTIE game on the PC was due for review right about now, but the game has since dropped off the schedules quicker than Coventry down the football league. *ISS 3* was looking pretty good when we played preview code - we'll hopefully have a review next month.

- Publisher: Konami
- Developer: Major A
- ETA: TBC
- Website: www.konamios.com/english/iss3/



US TOP 10

1	DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN	NOVALOGIC
2	THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA
3	COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA
4	THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA
5	ZOO TYCOON	MICROSOFT
6	POWERPUFF GIRLS: MOJO JOJO'S CLONE ZONE	TLC
7	CSI: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION	UBI SOFT
8	WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS	VU GAMES
9	BATTLEFIELD 1942	EA
10	MALL TYCOON	TAKE 2



BREED

Britain's brave sci-fi hopeful cranks up the action

WHILE IT'S BEEN a long time since Britannia ruled the high seas of games coding, there's always hope when you've got the likes of *Breed* battling against the tide. We recently got our hands on the latest alpha code of developer Brat's tactical action epic and it's looking better than ever. The new build introduced us to the heady joys of orbital space combat, shown here in all its glory for the first time, as well as new character models (like the female sniper and remodelled heavy gunner), new enemy types like the Breed scutters and commanders, and a few new vehicles to boot.

The brand new squad-command interface is equally impressive (see the top-left corner of the shot on the far right). With a click of an icon, you can instruct your squad to close in, spread out, hold, regroup or cease fire, as well as switch between a number of basic assault formations. It's an incredibly simple system, and doesn't slow down the alien-splattering action a bit, but it's also crucial if you want to stay in one piece. Of course, the squad-based FPS-style missions are just one part of the *Breed* formula, and vehicular jaunts offer plenty of frantic respite from the tactical shooting.

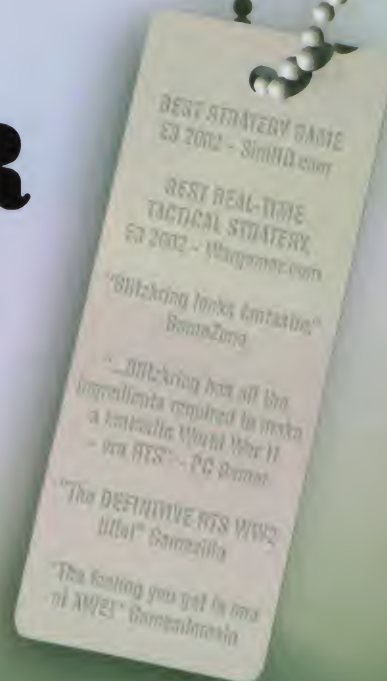
In fact, why not check it out for yourself, with the playable demo etched proudly on this month's *PC ZONE* cover-discs. You won't look back.

■ **Publisher:** CDV
■ **Developer:** Brat Designs
■ **ETA:** Q3 2003
■ **Website:** www.breedgame.com





PLAY WAR, DON'T MAKE WAR



IN 'THE' DEFINITIVE WW2 REAL TIME STRATEGY GAME... BLITZKRIEG!

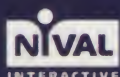
LAUNCH YOUR ATTACK! TAKE COMMAND OF THE ALLIED, GERMAN OR SOVIET FORCES IN WWII AS YOU FIGHT THROUGH THREE CAMPAIGNS WITH 23 HISTORICAL BATTLES AND UNLIMITED RANDOM MISSIONS THAT RECREATE THE THRILL OF VICTORY AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT. BLITZKRIEG IS A WWII REAL TIME STRATEGY FEATURING OVER 240 AUTHENTIC 3D FIGHTING UNITS AND 40 INFANTRY TYPES FROM 8 NATIONS THAT WILL CHALLENGE YOUR TACTICAL PROWESS LIKE NO OTHER GAME BEFORE IT. YOUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ON KEEPING YOUR MEN ALIVE AS THEY EARN EXPERIENCE, AND GAIN ACCESS TO BETTER EQUIPMENT TO CUT THROUGH YOUR ENEMIES IN BOTH SINGLE AND MULTIPLAYER GAMES. ATTACK IS THE ONLY DEFENSE, THE BLITZKRIEG HAS BEGUN!

FEATURES

- Three exciting campaigns with over 20 challenging missions
- Historically accurate battles of World War II in Africa, Russia and Europe
- Over 200 types of historically researched 3D vehicles and machinery, with realistic armour values
- Larger units including trains and coastal artillery
- Upgrades for your army in bonus missions
- Map editor included for an interactive community life

PC ZONE 84%

PC GAMER 84%



WWW.CDV.DE

VISIT FOR MORE INFO:
WWW.CDV-BLITZKRIEG.COM



E3 2003

ENTERTAINMENT EXPO

PART ONE

- | | |
|----|---|
| 30 | CALL OF DUTY |
| 36 | THIEF 3 |
| 40 | HALF-LIFE 2 |
| 43 | BLACK & WHITE 2 |
| 44 | XIII |
| 46 | BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WORLD WAR II |
| 47 | TRON 2.0 |
| 48 | ARMED & DANGEROUS |
| 50 | EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD |
| 52 | WORLD OF WARCRAFT |
| 53 | WARCRAFT 3: THE FROZEN THRONE |
| 54 | FIRE WARRIOR |
| 56 | STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE 2 |

Size matters. AKA: Five go mad in LA...

YOU'RE sitting on one of the biggest planes in the world. In the immediate vicinity is the biggest collection of wrongdoers you have ever seen, the people that you work with day-in, day-out, stumbling around the cabin, falling on the emergency exit, making obscene suggestions about an old man asleep with his

mouth open and getting alternately chastised/refused drinks by the increasingly irritated flight attendants.

Looking on these proceedings with a mixture of amusement, bemusement and downright aggression are the biggest games developers, publishers, PR ladies and marketing bods in the UK games industry.

It might sound like a nightmare with wings but it's actually the start of an

annual jaunt generally known as E3, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, when the entire games industry and all their hangers-on converge on the LA Convention Center to see the biggest games in the world, consume the biggest portions of food in the world and ogle the biggest breasts (and/or obese men) in the world.

This year, we assembled five of the best games journalists known to

man (Woods, Holden, Sefton, Korda and Hill), armed them with dictaphones and a fistful of dollars, and – in a bid to

restore some sort of balance to the proceedings – told them to come back with the smallest snippets of information they could find. The trouble is, they failed, big time, returning with the biggest scoops of the biggest games from the greatest games show on Earth. So big, in fact, that we couldn't fit them all in this issue. Look out for a really big Part Two next month, and in the meantime feast your beady eyes on this lot.

NEXT MONTH

E3 2003 Part 2

All new info and screenshots straight from the show on **Doom III**, **Rome: Total War**, **Deus Ex: Invisible War**, **Halo**, **Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines**, **Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy**, **Splinter Cell: Shadow Strike**, **Unreal Tournament 2004**, **The Movies** and many, many more...



"Every second man gets a rifle. When that man falls, the next man picks up the rifle." Needless to say, you don't get a rifle...

Assault on the senses...

CALL OF DUTY

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Infinity Ward
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.infinityward.com
ETA Christmas 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Made by the team behind *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*
- More intense than sticking your face in a fan
- Twice as smart as *Allied Assault*, with loads of cool new AI actions
- Three Allied nations to play, each with a full campaign
- 27 huge missions
- Heavily scripted for the most cinematic experience possible

CV



INFINITY WARD

A new development house formed by 22 former employees of 2015, including all the team leaders from *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*, Infinity Ward was established in 2002 with one game in mind: *Call of Duty*. They've got a long-term, exclusive deal in place with Activision, so we can expect more CoD games from them in years to come.

I ASK YOU friends, wherein lies the soul of a game? Is it in the name that adorns its crude outer packaging? Or is it in the hands and minds of those who lovingly created it? I do believe, yea verily, that any pilgrims with us today who have suffered the slings and arrows of *Star Wars: Force Commander*, *The Adventure Of Link* or *X-COM: Enforcer* will have to agree it's bloody-well not the former.

Join with me then, brothers and sisters, in celebrating the divine transmigration of the soul and spirit of our friend *Medal of Honor* into a new earthly shell, and welcome to this world... *Call of Duty*. Hallelujah brother!

Yes, verily, it's true. I've been to the mountain, or to an office in LA at least, and seen the truth. The amazing new

World War II shooter *Call of Duty* is *Medal of Honor 2* in all but name. The theme and setting, the bullet-riddled intensity, the deeply cinematic atmosphere – the soul of MoH: AA lives on right here.

And so it should too, considering that *Call of Duty* has no less than 22 of the original *Allied Assault* team working on it at new developer Infinity Ward, including all the original production leads. Publisher Activision has succeeded in snatching all the talent from the MoH franchise, and has created *Call of Duty* in its image, the only niggling problem being that they don't own the original name. Oh well, you can't have everything.

Although, having been to the US for a special behind-the-scenes look at the new game this month, we can reveal



"We're trying to recreate the gritty realism and intensity of war"

VINCE ZAMPELLA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, INFINITY WARD

There will be a variety of online multiplayer modes. But they're secret. Shh!

All the characters will have accurate weapon loadouts for the actual weapon they're using, with authentic ammo pouches and spare clips.

that *Call Of Duty* does have everything. Everything you ever hoped for from a *Medal Of Honor* sequel, everything you ever wanted from a World War II action game, full stop.

HEED THE CALL

If the idea of a spiritual successor to *Medal Of Honor* doesn't get you excited, then let me just refresh your memory a little. In early 2002, *Allied Assault* became the first FPS in three long years to break our resolve and push *Half-Life* off the number one spot on our top shooters list. It wasn't just the intense *Private Ryan* style action and sense of atmosphere that made us love it - *MoH: AA* was simply one of the most polished, playable and immersive FPS experiences

in years, and the multiplayer wasn't too shabby either.

Probably the most fondly remembered moment was, of course, the Normandy beach landing, which succeeded in creating one of the most desperate, shrapnel-ridden environments anyone had ever seen in a game.

And guess what, *Call Of Duty* takes the intensity of the Normandy landing and applies it across the whole damn game (except maybe the stealth levels). In fact, one or two of the missions, such as Stalingrad for example, make Normandy look like a stroll down Brighton Pier (before the sabotage, ideally).

"We're trying to recreate the gritty realism and intensity of war," agrees chief creative officer Vince Zampella, as he





"We've got tank battles, sniper missions, epic battlefields, small squad stealth actions – the whole gamut"

VINCE ZAMPELLA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, INFINITY WARD

"Looks like you've got a flak battery there, mate. That'll be why your lights aren't working – Hahahahaha-eeeurgh..."

starts to load up the game for us. "We're going to showcase the epic moments of WWII, while showing you that no one side or one soldier won the war on their own."

FACE TO FACE WITH THE INFINITE

This aim is expressed nowhere more clearly than in the game's structure, which sees the action divided into four successive campaigns – one each for the US, Britain and Russia, culminating in a final joint campaign in the heart of Nazi

Germany. The three campaigns also play very differently, each designed to reflect the kinds of tactics the various allies employed in real life. "The British style of war tended to rely on superior intelligence and commando raids," says Vince. "Small groups of soldiers, as seen in our mission to sneak on board the battleship Tirpitz, steal some documents and sink it. That's a very different objective than you'll find in the Russian campaign, where you're often just one of a wave of infantry bodies charging up a hill. Stalingrad is a great counterpoint to the Tirpitz in this way."

"We have a huge variety of missions as well: we've got tank battles, vehicle missions, sniper missions, huge, epic battlefield moments with hundreds of guys on screen. We've got small-squad action, stealth missions, disguise missions... it runs the whole gamut. In this mission here, you're trying to retake the town of St. Mère Eglise in Normandy. You've been dropped behind enemy lines, and you're now storming the town with a ragtag bunch of paratroopers."

At this point Vince is interrupted by a deafening hail of gunfire, explosions,

frantic yelling, and the sound of planes zooming low overhead. The level has loaded, and we've just been treated to our first moment in the *Call Of Duty* universe.

SHOCK AND AWE

OK, so in a way the scene is perfectly familiar. It's a first-person shooter, there's a gun swaying at the bottom of the screen, it's World War II – we've been here before. And yet somehow it's clear that things are markedly different this time. As Vince picks his way across a ravaged, cow-littered paddock, shooting furiously

ALL SHOOK UP

CALL OF DUTY INTRODUCES A COOL NEW SHELL SHOCK EFFECT THAT WILL LEAVE YOU REELING

It's one of those perennially annoying things that we've simply learned to live with, like London tubes and England's archaic licensing laws. There you are, on a battlefield (a virtual one), lobbing a grenade at a gaggle of enemies... It's not a bad toss, and the thing goes off in the middle of them, not quite close enough to kill, but certainly doing some damage. You run in to finish them off, but they've bounded to their feet and sniped you between the eyes with the alertness of a terrier on a caffeine binge. Where are the bleeding ears, vision loss, the serious concussions, the pounding headaches?

Well, irritable gamers, rejoice, as *Call Of Duty* is set to introduce a brilliant shell

shock effect that's sure to become genre-standard by the year's end. Survive any near misses from mortars, grenades, etc and you'll suffer from temporary shell shock, which is something like being hungover and underwater all at once.

"We were trying to get that hazy, distant feeling," explains Infinity Ward's Vince Zampella, "so your audio goes down a bit, your vision kind of blurs, your movement slows a little bit." It's extremely disorienting, but also very cool.

As this feature is designed to affect you more so than your AI opponents, it doesn't yet address the problem of enemies being inexplicably immune to shock effects, but it's still loads of fun.



Even if a blast is not close enough to kill you, it can leave you stunned.

Q&A

GRANT COLLIER
 PRESIDENT OF INFINITY WARD

We pull the head honcho of Infinity Ward out of his festering foxhole for a quick *mano a mano*.

PCZ Your game is inevitably going to be compared with *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*. How are you planning on distinguishing *Call Of Duty* from that game?

GC We're simply striving to make *Call Of Duty* the best game possible, not measured on any one else's efforts. We're just going forward, making the game we want to make.

PCZ OK, but what's the biggest difference in *Call Of Duty*?

GC Well, we've built in the three campaigns to bring a more accurate depiction of WWII, to kind of give you a feeling of how the war was won by the Allies, not by the US, not by any one side. We're trying to show how the tactics used by each side were different. The US was all about superior firepower. The British were about superior intel and tactics, and the Russians were about, well, just superior numbers. You'll see this in the tactics you have to use throughout the game.

PCZ What's your basic design philosophy when it comes to realism versus fun?

GC We push more for 'authenticity' than realism. Locations that you go to will be accurate, weapons that you use will be accurate – everything will look proper. But as far as fun versus realism, fun will always win – we're making a game here. Guns don't jam, there's no one-shot deaths. But at the same time you won't take a thousand shots to die. We try to keep it authentic without ever wanting to sacrifice the fun.

PCZ At the end of the day, what's the single biggest reason why people should be excited about *Call Of Duty*?

GC It's just a gritty, intense depiction of WWII. It shows you a more accurate depiction of the war, and, well, I think intensity is probably the one word that would stick out in my mind. And it's also a lot of fun. Intense fun – I'll say that, because it really is.

preservation, and they understand suppression too. It may not sound like much, but believe us, one clever twist like this and all of a sudden you've got some profound gameplay changes going on.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Not wishing to wait, we quickly returned to the game, this time a British mission to defend Pegasus Bridge in Normandy, and put the suppression instincts to the test. "I'm gonna cross this street against enemy fire," explains lead designer Zied Rieke as he inches around a building towards a dangerous looking battlezone. The enemy has the street pretty much

US paratroopers advance on St Mere Eglise, Band Of Brothers style.

Vince pauses to look down his sights and dispatch of a couple of snipers, then adds, "One of the real changes in *CoD* versus most other shooters is that you really are going to fear the bullets."

THE "OH MY GOD!" SQUAD

Another key similarity with *Medal Of Honor* is the squad-based system. Once again, you'll be accompanied on many of your missions by a group of cohorts capable of saving your life in difficult situations (and occasionally asking you to return the favour). Again, you won't be giving orders so much as taking them, and if you're good enough, leading by example.

Grant Collier, president of Infinity Ward, explains: "We wanted to take the cumbersome factor out of having a squad. If you had to direct them round all the time it would take a lot of the fun away. They basically know where to go. You can tell them to back off if you want to take over a position at a window or mounted gun, and they'll go do something else, but that's about the extent of it."

However, without doubt one of the most impressive features of the game is the newfound intelligence of the AI, advances that are going to make your squad mates in *MoH:AA* (or any game) look like prize gibbons. Infinity Ward's head technical man Jason West elaborates. "We've got AI that, non-scripted, just of their own accord, will jump over fences, climb through windows, climb ledges, jump off heights – not just walk and fall off, actually jump off! The level designers define the geometry of the level. They'll say, 'this is a good strategic point, this is a good area for this,' and then the AI has to take that into consideration and decide what to do."

"The AIs are doing a lot more than that, though," chips in Thaine Lyman, senior producer. "They also understand things like cover points and suppressive fire, which is one of the biggest things we've built in. You'll see the AI actually make use of different cover points, high points, low points... you'll see them crouching behind a point or standing up and leaning around a corner to make use of cover. Plus they understand suppressing fire, so if somebody is shooting at them, they don't just run out stupidly in front of the bullets – they'll dodge, they'll wait for the fire to die down then jump out and shoot."

Of course this works both ways – the enemy also has a sense of self-

Each of the armies featured in the game has an authentic arsenal of weapons.

and lobbing grenades as he goes, he's assaulted from all sides not just by enemy troops, but by a furious sensory blitzkrieg. Massive flak batteries light the night sky with a hail of yellow fire, bullets shatter palings as terrified soldiers cower behind wooden fences, the ground shakes with percussive force – it's a bewildering onslaught.

"*Call Of Duty* is all about authenticity," assures Vince. "Everything you see – vehicles, weapons, environments, missions – are as authentic as we could possibly make them." Not to mention

what you hear, with every weapon sound in the game recorded from actual vintage weaponry. "We've really tried to put you in trenches and let you experience war alongside the ordinary soldiers who really made the difference."

Certainly there's no feeling here that you are an all-powerful cigar-chomping superhero. In fact, there's more of a feeling of general panic and helplessness, just like the *MoH* beach landing. It almost seems like *Allied Assault* was testing the limits of our endurance, preparing us for this, the true attack that was to follow.

Thankfully, if you kill a German, you can pick up his weapon.

2003
expo
PART ONE

MOVIE MADNESS



Lifted from the opening scene of *Enemy At The Gates*, the Stalingrad level more than matches the intensity of the beach landing from *Medal Of Honor*.

CALL OF DUTY IS EVEN MORE RIFE WITH FILM REFERENCES THAN MEDAL OF HONOR

Medal Of Honor's Normandy beach landing is one of the most obvious recreations of a scene from a film in a game – it's the opening of *Saving Private Ryan*, for those who missed it. *CoD* takes this to new heights, modelling many of its levels on scenes from war flicks. In the Stalingrad level, the opening battle scene from *Enemy At the Gates* is recreated right down to the dialogue:

"Every second man gets a rifle. The man without the rifle

follows. When the man with the rifle is killed, the man without the rifle picks up the rifle and shoots."

We cornered lead designer Zied Rieke and asked him what other films and media have provided inspiration? "Well, *Band Of Brothers* has been very important for this game, though we haven't shown those bits yet. *Saving Private Ryan* obviously... *Where Eagles Dare* [espionage classic with Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood] was

another big one, and *The Longest Day* [star-studded D-Day recreation] for the Pegasus Bridge scene."

"There's a *Dirty Dozen* level," pipes up Jason West, "where you go into the chateau and you're on the stairs from the film... There's a lot actually – we've chosen all the stuff we thought was the coolest. But we don't want people to think, 'this is cool because it's like a movie,' we just want them to think, 'this is cool.'"

locked down, with three well-placed troops providing a crossfire. "Okay, so first I want to just spray the general area where the enemy is. That will suppress them, and they will duck down based on that and give me the chance to get across the street." So saying, Zied launches a well-placed burst and runs to a narrow alley on the other side. Incredibly, he is unscathed.

"That's real warfare stuff!" exclaims Jason. "In normal games, you shoot a couple of shots, both zing by his head and he doesn't care. In our game, you jump out, you spray a volley and go for it.

Or you might suppress, duck back and your friendlies will go across instead."

"It's the natural inclination too," adds Grant. "If confronted with an enemy, I'd be like 'oh shit I'm not aiming right at them, but I'll just fire because it's going to scare them'. It's your natural thought process, but it actually works in this game."

DAM IT ALL

The implications don't end there either. During the next mission we played through – an incursion to take out anti-aircraft guns on the Elder Dam – suppression got the better of us more than once. Each time, Zied would fire on some Germans, they'd all go down, and, thinking they were dead, we'd continue on our merry way. Of course, they were just crouching behind cover, suppressed, waiting to pop up and kill us. Those damn sneaky Nazis... "This suppression stuff is really awesome," says Jason, his enthusiasm unwavering. "You fire on a guy and whether he becomes suppressed or not depends on how green the guy is, or how fearless he is. You might fire above a couple of guys and some guys will just stay down there, scared."

Enemy soldiers are also fond of charging you with their rifles if you get



The emphasis on pacing and variety seen in *MoH* is ramped up in *Call Of Duty*.

too close for comfort. They'll simply run at you and attempt to beat you down the old-fashioned way, with cold steel and rifle butts. "It scares the hell out of me," admits Zied sheepishly.

TAKE A STANCE

Call Of Duty is also putting some interesting tactical emphasis on other, fairly standard FPS options, with the aim of forcing the player to think a little more about their actions. Take basic stances, for example. You're harder to hit when you're crouching, but you move slower, and you're even harder to hit when you're

prone. Pretty standard stuff, sure, but you get a large pay-off in accuracy, which becomes a serious issue with some of the rusty old weapons at your disposal. "This sort of thing means a lot in *Call Of Duty*," insists Jason. "You're harder to hit when you lean around corners as well – the AI accuracy is calculated based on how much of your body is exposed. And when you look down the sights, it puts you into a walk mode, but you get more accurate. If you don't take advantage of these options, the game is a lot harder."

"You can't just go through a level spraying bullets everywhere like Rambo,"

Do it for good old Uncle Sam.

BOFFIN TALK



The re-written animation system creates some fantastically realistic scenes.

BEFORE YOU EVEN ASK, HERE'S THE FULL DEAL ON THE TECHNOLOGY IN CALL OF DUTY

Call Of Duty looks stunning. The environments are huge, with a magnificently dirty, war-torn feel to them. They look even better in action, as the rubble-strewn streets and cratered fields are lit up by the fierce blazing storm of combat, with tanks rumbling across shattered ruins and buildings collapsing in billowing clouds of dust. Amazingly, all this is being achieved on a three-year-old rendering engine – or at least the barely recognisable husk of one that lies beneath a shiny new exterior.

"We started off with the *Quake III* engine," explains Jason West, "or actually with the *Wolf* engine which was based on the *QIII* engine. Then we rewrote the renderer, the AI, the animation system and the scripting language – pretty much all the major systems. The same framework is there, but all the major systems have been completely rewritten."

Grant Collier Adds: "In Stalingrad there are more than 100 guys on screen at any time, and without doing substantial tech changes there's no way we could have made that happen. You've got much larger environments, many more guys on screen, much more detail in everything; it's an entirely new experience, really."

The animation system also adds things like complex facial animation for the major players, limping and stumbling when characters get shot, and even a disturbing crawling animation, as badly wounded soldiers desperately drag themselves to cover. "It's only the AI though," clarifies Jason. "Having your own character limp when wounded was deemed annoying."

Incredibly, the minimum graphics card for the game will be a GeForce 1, giving succour to all the frugal gamers out there whose wallets are trembling at the thought of all this new technology.

The four campaigns must be played in linear order, to make sure the difficulty is ramped up steadily throughout the game.

agrees Thaine. "You have to behave more like a real soldier – really think about making use of cover and stances, as well as using suppressing fire so that you can get yourself around the enemy and flank them, or so one of your buddies can do it for you. It's a real departure from the standard run-and-gun shooter."

IT'LL BE OVER BY CHRISTMAS

Perhaps *Call Of Duty*'s most impressive aspect of all, however, is not the beautiful AI routines, its unprecedented levels of combat intensity or its fantastic environments, but simply how far advanced the thing is. In full development for less than a year, the game is already around 60 per cent complete, and on track

for a pre-Christmas launch. And while a lot of existing technology has been used, there's no denying the huge achievements made in that time, especially in the areas of graphics, AI and sheer 'stuff' on screen. With *Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault* barely in production and not due until well into 2004, the *MoH* boys have plenty of reasons to be concerned.

Having seen a good chunk of the game in action, we think it's safe to say that *CoD* will up the ante for intensity in games, as well as taking the brilliantly scripted, cinematic approach to action gaming to the next level. It is the new *Medal Of Honor*, but ten times better. And anyone who made it up that damn beach alive has got to love that. **PCZ**

"You can't go through the levels spraying bullets like Rambo. You have to think like a real soldier"

THAINE LYMAN
SENIOR PRODUCER, INFINITY WARD

While you'll sit in a lot of vehicles, shooting furiously while one of your squad-mates drives, the only ones you'll actually control are tanks.





It's an arrow and it's got a lump of flame stuck on the end. It can only mean one thing – guard barbecue.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ion Storm
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.thief3.com
ETA Winter 03/04

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Continuation of arguably the best stealth series on the PC
- Unreal engine and hiding in shadows? We like...
- The long-awaited return of the infamous moss arrow?
- Developed by Ion Storm. *Thief* fans – this is truly your lucky day.

The great game robbery THIEF 3

At school Keith Pullin used to be called Keith the Thief. Now at long last this pointless and libellous nickname has a purpose

WHEN LOOKING Glass Studios shattered and fell apart in early 2000 it was Ion Storm who ghosted in to smuggle master thief, Garrett, away from the gallows. But there was to be no instant return to roofs and alleyways for the PC's most popular house-breaker. Despite LGS's designs and scripts for *Thief 3* being in a fairly advanced stage, the priority for Ion Storm was *Deus Ex*.

So, Garrett's been skulking in the shadows ever since. It can't be easy standing still for that amount of time; taut muscles burning, breathing slowed to a minimum, resting heart rate virtually cryogenic – but like any good opportunist he's remained patiently poised until the moment to strike presents itself.

And that moment is here. *Thief 3* has finally reached a playable form and guess who's had a cunning pre-E3 look? That's right, yours truly managed to sneak into areas where no other magazine dared go

for a firsthand glimpse of the first-person action/stealth sequel Ion Storm thinks is going to be just as good as *Deus Ex 2*.

STEALING BEAUTY

One of the major reasons for this belief lies in the use of latest Unreal technology. Now, while a lot of FPS fans have serious reservations over the actual gameplay of *Unreal II*, absolutely no one has argued against the engine itself, which, in all probability is about the most gorgeous-looking piece of programming around – and, crucially, makes for some lovely shadows. So, if you're Ion Storm and you've got cash to spend, and moreover your aim is to improve upon the fantastic atmosphere created by the original *Dark Engine* technology, then quite simply what else can you do but license the very best technology there is?

Still, that alone is no guarantee of success. Thankfully, the *Thief* series has

always been more than just a set of nice looking levels. The first game, *Thief: The Dark Project*, was a tense, edgy thriller and the first real stealth-based FPS to appear on the PC. Its successor, *Thief 2: The Metal Age*, managed to innovate with some great mechanised inventions (like Garrett's mechanical eye) and improved enemy AI that not only sees you, but hears you too. Ultimately, the lure of both games is that if you play them properly, you can complete them without killing a single living thing. In this day and age that really is a rare and pleasant change.

T3's project director and lead designer, Randy Smith knows the third installment will have to possess the qualities that made the first two games so enjoyable.

"The *Thief 3* team is striving to strike the perfect balance between the two. *Thief 3* will have the dark mood and grim atmosphere of *Thief: The Dark Project* while maintaining and evolving the action

THIEF OR ASSASSIN?

DO YOU WANT TO RUN AND HIDE OR DO YOU WANT TO STAND AND FIGHT? IN *THIEF 3* YOU CAN DO BOTH



Go on, he's begging for it.

Many fans believe that the true beauty of the *Thief* games is in the core stealth over violence gameplay, which means you can complete all missions without anyone knowing you'd been there.

Thief 3 continues this tradition, but it also provides more options for players who don't mind being spotted, and crucially who like to have a variety of means at their disposal to ensure their enemy dies very, very horribly indeed.

As Randy Smith explains: "*Thief* is a very open-ended game allowing players to overcome challenges in a variety of ways. Our design philosophy empowers players to make choices about which play style they wish to pursue. This is taken to an extreme in *Thief 3*, as you can play through the entire game ambushing and killing every enemy if you choose, or if you're good enough and you prefer the subtle approach, you can get through the entire game without ever being detected once!"

So, the question is do you want to be a thief or do you want to be an assassin?

If only you could see this guy in motion – life of the party.



The medieval-industrial vision of the series continues.

stealth gameplay that was emphasised in *Thief II: The Metal Age*."

Of course, Randy is underselling things a little here, as the opportunities for 'evolving' that gameplay are immense, especially given recent developments in real-world physics technology. Indeed, one of the most amazing things about *T3* is the way you can manipulate the objects around you. Imagine – you're sniffing around a room you shouldn't be in and you hear footsteps coming up the corridor. Rather than panicking and jumping out the window into the moat, why not carefully push a table, barrel or anything you can get your thieving little mitts on across the door to block it? With any luck the over-curious guard will think the door is locked or jammed and leave you to your job.

This kind of interactivity is a double-edged sword of course – especially when mixed with the newly-honed AI. If you're

lucky the not so determined guard will be duped by your trickery. If you're unlucky and that particular guard is doing his job properly, you might suddenly find the door crashing inwards with five Hammer guards standing in the doorway.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

"The environments in *Thief 3* are extremely detailed and highly responsive," affirms Smith. "We're using the Havok physics engine, which means that objects bounce and collide very believably, and they make very realistic sounds when they do so, sounds which can be used to distract guards – or make them suspicious."

So, as previously mentioned, although it's now a lot easier to interact with more objects than either of the previous two *Thief* games, it's just as easy to be caught out by the game's agile realism. And it's not

"The environments in *Thief 3* are extremely detailed and highly responsive"





just sound and movement that's benefited from this total overhaul.

A proud Randy Smith enthuses: "We've got an advanced system to handle breakable objects, and you can watch objects fracture into their component parts, such as a barrel which breaks into boards and O-rings."

Don't think this is all just fancy aesthetics either. Once a barrel like this breaks up you can then pick up a bit of wood and knock out an enemy in the same way you might use a blackjack. Just like in the real world, what you do with objects you discover or create is limited only by your imagination. (Just don't end up in the pages of bizarreinserctions.com...)

LIFE'S A BITCH

So, what about the story then? What new evil does our hero face this time? Well, to cut a long story short, Garrett finds out from the Keepers (his old mentors) that a new Dark Prophecy is almost upon the City. Unsurprisingly Garrett's name seems to appear prominently in that prophecy. Being the wily fellow that he is, he decides that maybe this time he might actually take it seriously. After all, the last time he scoffed at the fanciful notions of the Keepers he ended up losing an eye. Thus the world-weary, cynical and downright selfish thief embarks on a quest to end these problems that plague his dreams of a quiet, uncomplicated life of plain old nicking stuff.

RATS THE SIZE OF HORSES

HOW MANY TIMES WOULD A GUARD HEAR YOUR ELEPHANT-LIKE ATTEMPTS AT STEALTH AND DECLARE THAT "IT MUST HAVE BEEN A RAT"? WELL, THOSE DAYS ARE GONE...



He may look thick, but he topped his class at grunt school.

The guards in *Thief 3* will amaze you with their variety of clever responses and shrewd behaviour. For example, the AI's have increased ability to reason about their environment. They pay attention to and may decide to respond to open doors, extinguished torches, suspicious shadows and other evidence. They even notice when loot has been stolen or when their mates are missing.

They are also far more paranoid and suspicious than before. They search extremely thoroughly when they go into a room and will check everything from behind furniture to the inside of chimneys. Simply crouching in a corner and waiting for them to pass does not work. If a guard is coming your way in their sweep of the room, you have to double back to someplace they've already searched.

Truly these guys are MENSA candidates, and to outwit them you will have to be fleet of foot than you can possibly imagine.

Yet, despite the main quest, *T3* again retains the open-ended nature of its predecessors and presents a seductive list of potential targets to test your clandestine skills. Churches, castles, shops, dungeons, ancient ruins, banks, prisons, museums and mansions are all there for you to explore, break into and callously rob blind.

But let's not forget the basics either. Like *Thief* and *Thief 2* there are plenty of doors, levers, buttons, lights, elevators and other objects that keep this busy world ticking over and feeling authentic. And, of course, Garrett as a master thief is constantly making use of his environment – whether it's squatting behind the

furniture, climbing into the rafters, picking locks, or putting out torches, there's no shortage of ways to 'get into character'.

For us, getting into character invariably means spraying a variety of weird and wonderful arrows around the place. In fact,

one of the things that always rather amused us was the moss arrow – used to create a soft, noiseless path across an otherwise percussive floor. Has Garrett finally sussed the idea of taking his tap dancing shoes off instead of firing this



The choice of approaches to each situation promises to be generous. In this case, will you extinguish the torch with an ice arrow or try to sneak past the guard?



"Fans of the series will be delighted at the amount of new stealth options rammed into the game"

this is just the start of what you can achieve with T3's shadows.

One of the coolest ideas of the stealth system in *Splinter Cell* was the way you could (supposedly) change where shadows appeared and even create them yourself, though in effect this just meant shooting out light bulbs everywhere you went. Believe us when we say this idea is taken to a whole new level in *Thief 3*, with more direct control over light and shadow than we have ever seen before. If there's light streaming in through a window, you can actually stack furniture up against the window and watch the shadow slide across the room.

HOPE IN THE SHADOWS

Garrett clearly has a lot to come to terms with, and fans of the series will be delighted at the amount of new stealth options rammed into the game. It's no wonder Ion Storm is just as excited about this as they are about *Deus Ex 2*. After seeing it for ourselves we fully understand why. The game looks sure to exceed the quality of the first two games combined – not bad when you consider that it wasn't so long ago the *Thief* series looked as doomed as the developer that gave birth to it – not to mention vastly extend the reach of stealth-based gameplay.

You'll be able to get your sticky paws on *Thief 3* this winter. In the meantime, keep your good eye fixed on **PC ZONE** for more exclusive updates. **PCZ**



Grab the edge of the rug and... yank.

arrow into the floor? It's a question we put to Mr Smith who, after assuming we were taking the piss, simply reminded us that Garrett can tip-toe slowly across a room if he doesn't want to use his secret weapon.

Talking of secrets, we're sad to say the rest of the gadgets and weaponry in the game are also strictly under wraps at this stage. Our probing in this direction was met with a cheeky smile from Mr Smith

and a rather unhelpful response of:

"We've put a lot of thought into broadening Garrett's toolkit and refining his trusty weapons and gadgets from the previous games." Make of that what you will, though close inspection of our screenshots may reveal a couple of available weapons...

Of course, Garrett has spent most of his life in the shadows and T3 presents no

change in this department. In fact, due to the *Unreal* engine's capacity to squeeze out some fairly tasty volumetric real-time shadows, he spends more time than ever lurking with intent.

For example, we saw a guard holding a torch walk down a hallway with columns on either side. As the guard passed each column, long, stretching shadows were cast onto the floor and walls. Needless to say the effect is absolutely mind-blowing. In terms of gameplay it's pretty impressive too. Hiding behind one of the columns, you actually have to edge around the base of it to stay in the darkness.

In another area, a huge pendulum at the top of a clock tower casts a moving shadow on the floor as it swings back and forth. The only way Garrett can move from one side of the room to the other undetected is if he hugs the shape of the shadow as he shuffles along. It's incredible to behold, and yet staggeringly

STEALTH GOLF

THE ANCIENT ART OF GOLF IS AN UNTAPPED WELL OF STEALTH ACTION, AND HERE'S WHY...



The fairways will be safe once more with Garrett lurking in the rough.

So where do we go now with the whole stealth genre thing? We've got *Metal Gear Solid*, *Splinter Cell*, *Project IGI*, *Hitman* – all games about angry young men killing people. If you ask us, it's starting to get a bit samey, and if truth be known the only real hint of originality in this whole mix is *Thief*, which ironically is the one that started the whole thing off.

No, we need a change. What we need is a stealth golf game. It's no secret that I'm a bit of a fan of the ancient and noble game, and I'm convinced it could be combined with sneaking around killing people to brilliant effect. What with teenage hoodlums stealing your ball when you slice into the woods, and non-members sneaking onto the course when there's a gap in play, there's surely plenty of scope for some stealthy action there. You could call it *Thief 4: Dirty Pikey Ball Thieving Tossers*.

Come on Ion Storm, you know you're just a teeny weeny bit interested...



Would you trust a man with hands this big?



LAST
PREVIEWED
PCZONE
ISSUE
129



I bet they're delicious with a bit of lemon and pepper...



The aliens in *Half-Life* were just the advance guard. This is their mum.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Valve Software
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.valvesoftware.com
ETA September 30

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The sequel to arguably the best game of all time
- Looks like being the new best game of all time
- AI that reacts intelligently to its surroundings
- Lifelike characters and facial expressions
- Stunning engine

AFTER four years of waiting, the gaming public finally got an eyeful of the game we've all been waiting for at E3. And it was, in a word, incredible. Since *PC ZONE* first unveiled the game to the world last month, the gaming community has been going crazy to see it in the virtual flesh. And for those yet to see the game in action, the demonstration proved well worth the wait. If it's physically possible, the level of expectation for *Half-Life 2* has been raised still further – we knew exactly what to expect, and even so we couldn't fight the goosebumps.

A life less ordinary... HALF-LIFE 2

Stunning E3 demonstration reveals the PC's most hotly anticipated game to the world. Martin Korda reports

The demonstration started off with the new character and sidekick to Gordon, Alyx, inviting you to take a tour round a warehouse where she'd show you various features of the game. All round her beautifully modelled body, scientists were busy at work, clucking at her that this really wasn't a good time for her to be showing people round the game. Ignoring them good-naturedly, she fixed us with a genuinely warm smile, and bid us to follow her round the complex.

But as the tour unfolded – demonstrating the game's stunning physics system, and eye-popping visuals which had onlookers shaking their heads in sheer disbelief – things started to go wrong, with a sudden flurry of explosions, accidents and machinery breaking down.

And the more things went awry, the less attention Alyx paid us, becoming more and more distracted by the calamity around her, her face screwing up into a distracted, perturbed scowl.

ENTER THE TRIPODS

And then it happened. The wall on the far side of the warehouse came caving in, sending scientists running away in panic, as a 90 foot, three-legged strider filled the screen. Suddenly, we weren't the audience any more, but instead had been transported into the body of Gordon Freeman, armed and unleashed at the alien hordes which flooded in until only a cloud of dust and dead bodies remained.

From the mist a figure emerged, menacingly filling the screen as it

approached us. Slowly, the silhouette transformed into a sharp-suited figure. It was the G-Man. He stopped directly in front of us. "Welcome back Gordon," he said, a faint smile colouring his pale face, and then the scene faded away.

The auditorium burst into spontaneous, rapturous applause, the adulation soaked up by a beaming director of marketing for Valve Doug Lombardi and the company's founder Gabe Newell, who both confirmed that they were still on course for a September 30 release.

We intend to bring you the latest behind the scenes information every month until this amazing work of art is released, but in the meantime, enjoy the beauty on this page.



"Perhaps the most ambitious
game in development at the
moment, if not ever"

PCZONE

"One thing's for certain:
we can't wait
for the revolution"

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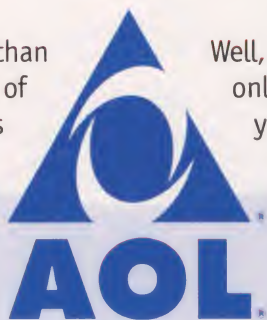
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We wait, that's what we do...

BLACK & WHITE 2

Martin Korda catches up with the game that could change strategy gaming forever

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Black And White Studios

PUBLISHER EA

WEBSITE www.bwgame.com

ETA TBA

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Breathtaking graphics
- Intuitive command interface
- Stunning, cinematic Miracles
- All new creatures
- It looks like being the game *Black And White* should have been

I KNOW what you're thinking. *Black & White* wasn't the game you hoped it would be, and now you're suspicious. You won't allow yourself to believe that *Black & White 2* could be the game the first one should have been.

Lets be honest, *Black & White* was a hugely ambitious game, full of superb ideas, but somehow the whole thing didn't quite gel. But having played *B&W2* a few months ago, and being utterly astounded, I'm convinced they've got it spot on this time. What's more at E3 I had the chance to catch up with studio head Jonty Barnes, to find out the latest developments on what's looking like the most groundbreaking strategy game in years.

"Lots of changes have been made since Christmas," reports Jonty. "The most obvious ones are the visuals; the

integration of some of our new 3D technologies like the landscape flora, combined with the new villagers and buildings, makes the game look very different." A quick look at these stunning screenies bears witness to this.

So what about some of the new gameplay features? Like creatures...? "Their visuals have been totally reprogrammed since *B&W*, and the AI has been built upon and refined. There's been much discussion on which Creatures we should include in *B&W2* and we're keeping

tight-lipped on the ones that will make it into the final game. We're running a poll on www.bwgame.com, where you can vote on which Creature we should make next." So if you want to see a giant aardvark in the game, you know where to go.

And so on to the Miracles. We've heard about the everyday ones, such as fireballs you can squeeze and pour into trenches as well as throw at opposing armies. But what of the so-called Epic Miracles? "These are attached to town wonders," explains Jonty. "These are large buildings

which take some time to build and charge with miracle power, but once charged you can cast them anywhere – and they can be devastating. For example, the Earthquake Miracle rips the terrain apart, destroying everything in its path, and the Siren spell seduces soldiers, leaving them incapacitated on beams of light."

BATTLING GOD

The biggest difference between this and the original game though is that *B&W2* will be just as much a 3D RTS as a god-game, with epic battles and a fully tactical 3D landscape. Curious as to how the large-scale combat is going to work, I probed Jonty further about the unit control interface. "We have a method called Army Threading. When you grab an army's control flag, a thread appears between the flag in your hand and the army. By placing down the flag you can assign armies to things in the world and they'll behave appropriately. For example, you can place an army thread on a city wall and they will defend the city from the wall by shooting arrows at the enemies, and alerting the town to the attack."

Simple yet effective, an attitude that Jonty and his team are using to make *Black & White 2* a much more accessible and fulfilling experience than its predecessor. It's clearly starting to come together, and we'll bring you a much more in-depth look at this strategy epic very soon. [EW]

"The biggest difference between this and the original is that *B&W2* will be just as much a 3D RTS as a god-game"



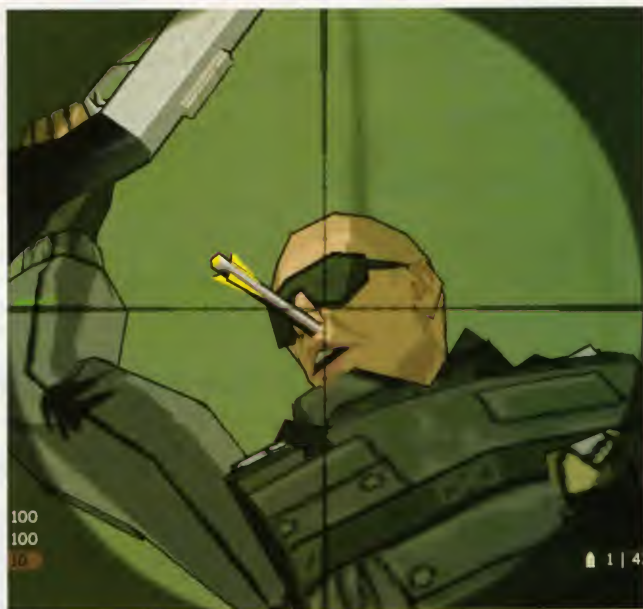
The game's epic battles will allow your gargantuan creatures to fight alongside armies of thousands.



You can vote for the creatures you want in the game.



The grappling hook – one of XIII's useful tools.

The comic book graphics are reminiscent of another French title, *Flashback*.

A bolt in the head is worth two in the bush.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.ubi.com
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Gorgeous cel-shaded visuals
- Violent blood splattering
- Neat graphic novel touches
- Clever improvised weapons such as chairs
- Multiplayer bar brawls planned

Fun with roman numerals...

XIII

The president of the USA has been assassinated and you're the prime suspect – despite the fact you can't remember who the hell you are. **Jamie Sefton** enters a cartoon world even more violent than *Itchy & Scratchy*

"AAAAAAAAGH!" A henchmen's screams are plastered across the screen in vibrant lettering, as he recoils in a shower of blood while three graphic novel frames zoom in on the metal bolt that has just been shot into his head. If you think that all cartoon cel-shaded games are a bit childish, then rewire your brain immediately – Ubi Soft's *XIII* ("Thirteen") is quite brutal.

Based on an apparently popular Belgian comic book (we'll have to take their word on that because for all we know it's as well-liked as *Fred Bassett*), *XIII* is a conspiracy-fuelled first-person thriller that not only uses its unusual graphic novel setting for visual panache, but also for some pretty nifty gameplay twists.

XIII begins with your character waking up on a beach with amnesia, not knowing who he is or why he's suddenly set upon by aggressive persons armed with heavy weapons – the only clue is a key to a safety deposit box and an ominous "XIII" tattoo etched into his chest. And no it's not the result of a healthy stag night prank. The American president has been assassinated

and it soon becomes apparent that you (Mr XIII) has been blamed for it.

CARTOON VIOLENCE

We must admit that here at ZONE we were somewhat apprehensive about the game's cartoon-y appearance. After all, who would prefer *XIII*'s garish textures compared with, say, the gritty WWII settings of *Medal Of Honor* or the gleaming, hi-tech sci-fi settings of *Unreal II*? However, within a few minutes of play, you start to realise that this cel-shaded blaster has a sinister undercurrent, with

(the game has yet to be localised in English) and they fall backwards in pain, collapse in contortions, or fall off high bridges with an "Aaaaaaaa" following behind them vertically to the ground.

As well as traditional weapons such as your grenades, guns and bazookas, *XIII* can also pick up and swing certain objects, including chairs and bricks. On one level we used a shard of glass from a broken window, which when thrown, lodged into the temple of a particularly unfortunate guard. After the kill, we picked up the body – one of the many stealth

"The weapons have a nasty kick, with gutsy sound effects and realistic recoil"

plenty of bloody ultraviolence, slick comic book frames that highlight stealth kills in gory close-up (see *You've Been Framed* box) and meaty weapons.

Yep, you heard right – the weapons really have a nasty kick, with gutsy sound effects and realistic recoil. Unleash a few rounds of M16 machine gun fire into an area crawling with French-speaking goons

themed devices in the game – and dumped him in an empty room. All good.

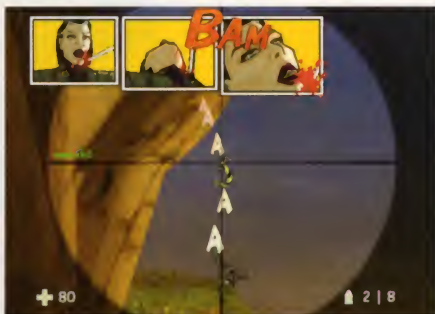
"NOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

As we touched upon earlier, any action in the game is accompanied by visual representations of the sound, such as the "Baboom!" of an explosion. But the onomatopoeic





Many of the cel-shaded environments are stunning. One in the neck for a female adversary.



XIII infiltrates the base by swimming.



Not the sort of moment you want to be reloading your pistol in.



Ubi Soft is planning an all-star voice cast, including female rapper Eve.

effect is also used for stealthy gameplay, with XIII able to use a "sixth sense" that flashes the giveaway "tap, tap, tap" of any approaching enemy's feet dynamically on-screen.

XIII's levels are linear with a smattering of none-too-taxing puzzle-solving in between the shooting, including collecting key cards from guards, opening doors, collecting fuses for ski lift mechanisms

and rescuing prisoners. One of the best sections we played involved the grappling hook, which can be used to swing between bridges using momentum – beware those with motion-sickness – and lower yourself down dangerous, electricity-spiked lift shafts.

Another cool moment is set on a cliff-top, with cel-shaded waves crashing spectacularly against the rocks below. After mowing down guards by the half-dozen for a while, you encounter one of XIII's end-of-level bosses – a heavily-armed helicopter gunship, which has to be taken down with a few carefully-aimed rockets.

PUB FIGHTS

From the early code we played of XIII, Ubi Soft's cartoon shooter certainly has plenty of va-va-vooom, possessing many neat graphical touches, such as breath from character's mouths in cold levels and dream-like flashback sequences revealing clues about your shadowy past. Some weapons, like

the skull-splitting laser-sighted sniper crossbow, is immensely satisfying – as are the numerous "improvised" weapons you can pick up and twat enemies with. Multiplayer games are planned with deathmatch and Capture The Flag maps, but the French development team is also planning to include a Bar Brawl, where players recreate a Glaswegian bar at closing time by hurling broken bottles, chairs and bricks at each other in Begbie-from-*Trainspotting* style.

Whether PC gamers will accept the deceptively-kiddie comic book graphics that sit alongside blood-splattering violence, remains to be seen. XIII is already enjoyable and may be a breath of fresh air in the first-person shooter genre, but the planned launch date is in September when a small game called *Half-Life 2* is due to send mouse/keyboard assassins into spasms of ecstasy... **PZ**

YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

XIII GIVES YOU A COMIC BOOK CLOSE-UP OF YOUR LETHAL HANDIWORK

The best bit in XIII is undoubtedly the stealth kills. Tool up with the game's superb crossbow, zoom in on an enemy's head and fire away – the moment a bolt hits them you're presented with a unique three-frame mini-comic of the moment of death. The first frame shows the bolt entering their head; the second zooms in to display their head snapping back; the third sees a full close-up of them screaming in pain with your projectile lodged in their head. Because the panels are rendered in real-time, you'll always get a different sequence depending on how you've seen off your opponent. Apart from being executed with oodles of style, the frames encourage you to use stealth, rather than just steaming through the game with guns blazing.

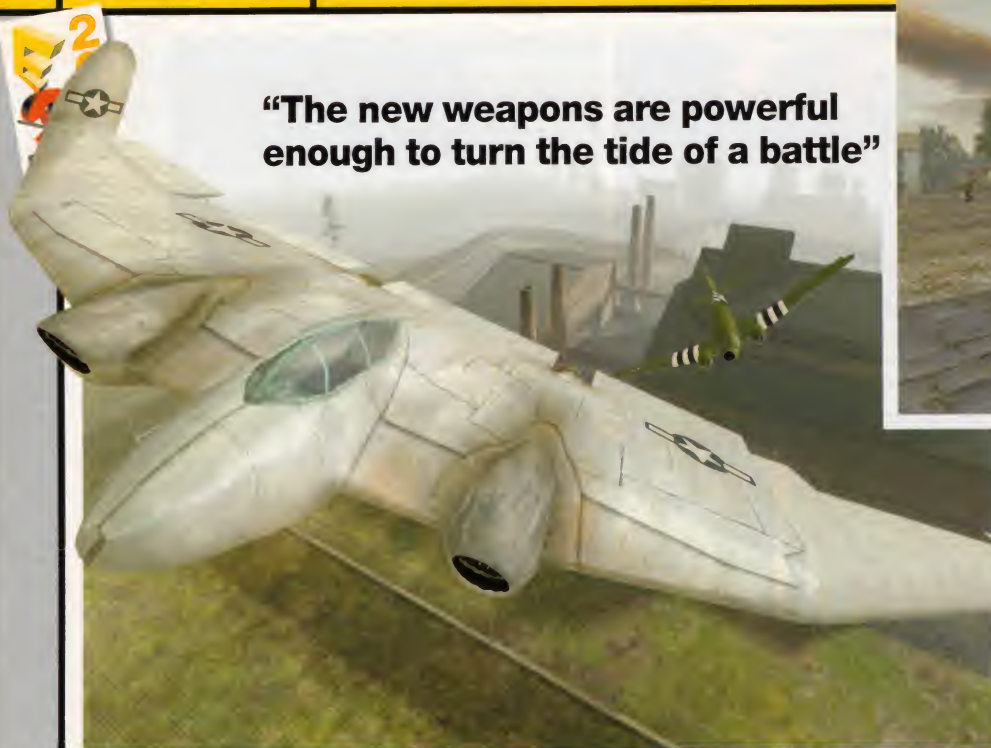


Crossbow bolts stick into baddies' heads in a brutal fashion.

AAAAARRRR!
CRAACK!



"The new weapons are powerful enough to turn the tide of a battle"



The Armstrong-Whitworth AW-52 flying wing never flew in a WWII battle, but what the hell, eh?



British Commandos and German Elite troops are new.



The Wasserfall rocket can be flown in first-person!

Loose lips sink ships...

BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WORLD WAR II

A gun that fires cottage cheese! Tanks made out of rubber! Chicken helmets! That's the last time we put Paul Presley in charge of a secret weapons project...



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions Canada
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.battlefield1942.ea.com
ETA Autumn 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Huge new add-on to the best online shooter since *Counter-Strike*
- Kooky new units, weapons and experimental vehicles
- Jet packs!
- Objective-based gameplay – taking *BF1942* beyond mere CTF
- Cargo plane is mobile spawn point
- Single-player AI given a boost

WHY ARE so many people still playing *Counter-Strike*? Surely the boat sailed on that old relic many, many moons ago? World War II is where the future's at. (Er, if you see what I mean.) *Battlefield 1942* is easily the best multiplayer fragfest currently doing the rounds, especially now that the lag problems have been sorted out. Publisher Electronic Arts and developer Digital Illusions still seem convinced at least, hence this second add-on pack for the superlative shooter, due out later this Autumn.

Secret Weapons Of World War II, apart from being one of the more unwieldy

names of late, throws over a dozen new bits and pieces into the fray – from flying wings to super tanks to – get this – rocket-powered jet packs!

"What we've done in *Secret Weapons* is to gear the levels more towards combat and larger, focused encounters," says Armando Marini, creative lead at Digital Illusions Canada. "If you compare the new weapons to those in the original game, they're almost powerful enough to turn the tide of a battle. For instance, early on in the project we used El Alamein as a test bed. When we completed the Hortons [a powerful fighter plane equipped with a 30mm gun], it really felt like the Germans had this invincible war machine."

BIG BIRD

Fortunately these new weapons will only appear in the new maps included in the add-on pack, maps such as Eagle's Nest, a version of the raid on the infamous German mountain fortress. The nature of the objectives in the game has also changed. It's no longer just about holding territory – each side will now have specific objectives to achieve in each level, more in the vein of multiplayer *Wolfenstein*.

"In the Eagle's Nest, the Allies begin at the base of a mountain road," explains Marini. "The Allies have to reach several points along the way up, then get to the

Eagle's Nest, break through an armoured door and destroy a safe containing classified documents. Being part of this mission is a lesson in defense and diversionary tactics. It puts the game in a whole new light."

Such specified gameplay requires tightly focussed teamwork to work correctly of course, and to that end the single-player game is getting a significant AI overhaul. Marini claims that the team has had much more time to develop the bot AI this time round, making for a more satisfying offline experience.

WACKY WARFARE

So, will the new 'super' weapons enhance *BF1942*'s reputation, or just turn it into a novelty-packed curio? Naturally Marini is upbeat: "I think the focus on concentrating the battles will draw more people into trying the game. *Secret Weapons* is taking the best that *Battlefield* has to offer and building upon that. We analyzed every aspect of the original game and think we've raised the bar a little higher."

With jet-packs, rocket planes and guided missiles buzzing around in the mix, it's certainly going to raise the bar for craziness in the game, which can only lead to good things. There's only so much longer the world's *Counter-Strike* fans can keep their heads in the dust. [P]



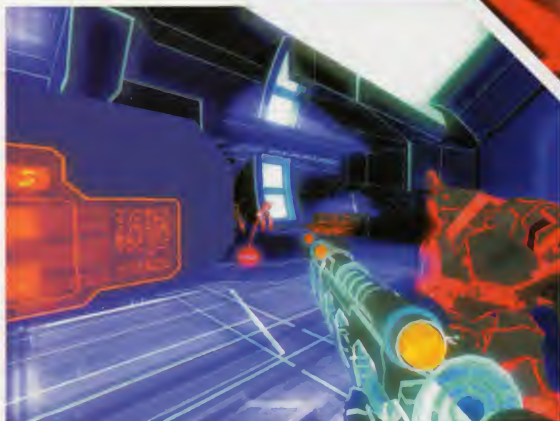
The expansion adds 16 new vehicles to the mix, taking the total to 46.

THE DETAILS

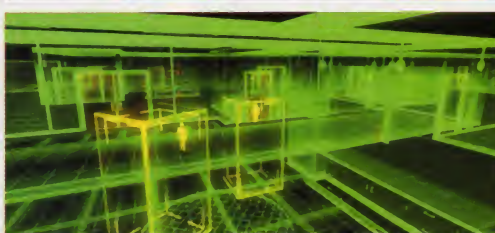
DEVELOPER Monolith
PUBLISHER Disney Interactive
WEBSITE www.lith.com
ETA August 26

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's based on the cult-classic film *Tron*, or its sequel anyway
- It looks like *Tron*!
- Some great RPG elements
- Light Cycles and Disk Arenas



All the weapons can be modified in both shape and function.



Transparent urinals? That'll never catch on.

HOW TIMES change. Twenty years ago, *Tron* was hailed as a groundbreaking film, melding cutting edge graphics with a highly original story. Watch it today, and it's little more than a laughably backward film featuring graphics akin to a GCSE computer studies project. Time then for an upgrade, a facelift and a whole new injection of life from gaming giants Monolith.

Paralleling the story from the planned film sequel, *Tron 2.0* is set 20 years after the original Disney flick, and sees the return of Alan Bradley, the wet-lipped Encom scientist who saved the day the first time round. As it happens, he's spent the last two decades re-creating the digitising technology that was destroyed along with MCP (the paedophile-voiced super computer) at the end of the film. Alan's son Jet works for the same

Prepare to be digitised... TRON 2.0

Martin Korda gets sucked into an FPS, 20 years in the making



company, creating games. But when Alan goes missing, Jet sets off on a danger-soaked mission of discovery, which will suck him into the digital world. Just like Dad!

Right, that's the scene set then, so what about the gameplay? We managed to steal a sneak look at the game with lead game designer Frank Rooke, who told us all about his creation, and even let

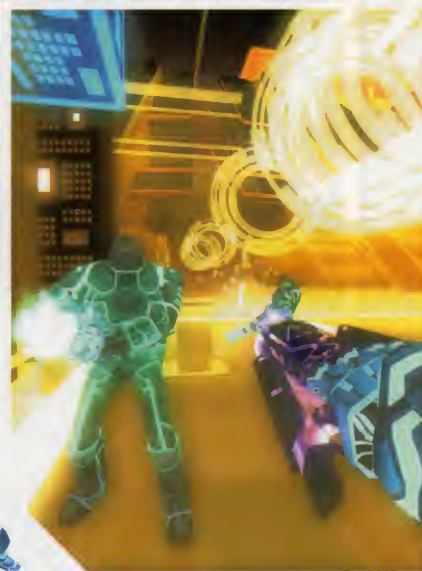
us touch it once or twice. He confirmed our suspicions that it's an FPS, spiced with RPG elements, which uses the latest Littech engine to create a graphical style evocative of the films, but updated for the rapacious graphics-whores of today.

"Every element of the movie exists in the game," claimed Frank. Which means you'll be able to use your killer Frisbee to attack foes and deflect enemy attacks, as well as impressing the girls down the beach by catching it in your arse crack.

DAYS OF THUNDER

Light Cycles are also set to feature heavily, and after several games, it was clear that this was going to be a hugely addictive sub-game. Online options will allow you to battle other people in disk-throwing arenas, but sadly the online Light Cycle game will likely be ditched as the split second reactions involved look set to make even the smallest amount of lag a huge handicap. Boo.

In the single-player game, you'll be able to tackle each level in a variety of ways, thanks to a collection of download stations which will be dotted around the computerised world, and provide you with a series of power-ups. As Frank explained, "We call our weapons and armour Subroutines, which are little programs that you can download. They



Consider yourself recycled...

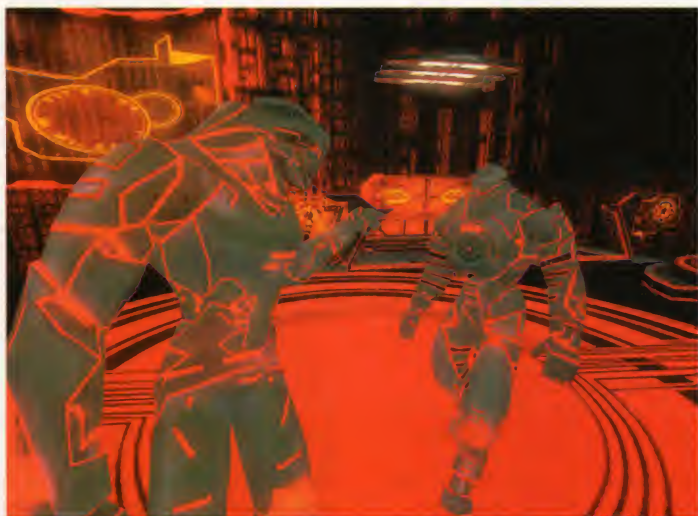
come in three different states: Alpha, Beta and Gold. The higher the upgrade the more memory they take up." These include stealth, shooting, speed and agility upgrades, all adding to the gameplay variety and replay value. "You can change your enhancements any time you want," adds Frank. "So if you're stuck on one part of a level you can reconfigure yourself and try and tackle it in a whole different way."

FULL OF LIGHT

With a diverse and intelligent range of enemies to blast into bloody code-strings, an intriguing plot and some great new ideas to embellish the already rich *Tron* universe, Monolith looks like it's doing a fine job in resurrecting a sleeping celluloid giant – maybe even paving the way for the movie sequel. Provided they get that Light Cycle racing sorted out, they could be on to a winner. [X]

"Every element of the movie exists in the game"

FRANK ROOKE
LEAD GAME DESIGNER



Oi you! Where's your neck gone?

2003
expo
PART ONE



Rarely have so many guns been found in such a whimsical setting.



Tchk - it's so hard to find good Grunts these days.

Got Sheep?

ARMED & DANGEROUS

A band of marauders takes *Russell Fischer* hostage, along with good taste and common sense

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Planet Moon Studios
PUBLISHER LucasArts
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com/products/armedanddangerous
ETA Winter 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- An original LucasArts title! Now they don't come around every day
- The genre-bending style of *Giants* with a faster pace
- Pythonesque humour and silliness
- Engaging characters doing entertainingly stupid things
- A gun with teeth

CV

PLANET MOON STUDIOS

In business since 1997, the ten-man cadre known as Planet Moon is overseen by partners Nick Bruty and Bob Stevenson. While they've only released one title to date, key members have also been responsible for MDK and the console versions of *Earthworm Jim 1 & 2*.

2000 Three years of development hell came to fruition in December 2000, with the release of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

2003 A long silence is broken with the announcement of the very silly *Armed & Dangerous*.

AH, SUMMER. Those halcyon days when fields and meadows beckon, and the sweet perfume of future memories are borne on gentle zephyrs. A time for blockbuster movies to transport their wide-eyed audience into another world of action and intrigue. What better time, then, to receive news of *Armed & Dangerous*, a bullet-riddled original title from the franchise-prone chaps at LucasArts.

STORY, BLOODY STORY

Taking third-person action to a ridiculous extreme, *Armed & Dangerous* casts intrepid players at the command of a group of thieving, unlikely heroes. Led by criminal mastermind Roman, the diverse roster features such unsavoury

types as a seer-cum-madman, a Scottish demolitions expert, and just to round things off, a robot who's attained inner peace through a studied love of tea. No, we haven't confused the fact sheet with that of a posthumous Douglas Adams novel or the new *Futurama* DVD release - this is spot on the level. Just to prove it, there's not an ounce of interstellar shipping involved.

The motley crew, known as the Lionhearts, has lined up a serious score: pulling the biggest heist ever, and right in the gullet of a war to boot. Fortunately, they're armed with enough firepower to blow the cooling unit off your new GeForce Ultra. Oh, and there's a bit about rebellion and a tyrant king in there, too. Now it's beginning to sound more

BEASTS OF BURDEN

WHAT'S WITH THE SHEEP?

In *Giants*, the primary resource was the bovine Vimps. While animal husbandry doesn't seem to be a crucial factor in *Armed & Dangerous*, one can't help but notice those sheep loitering about the screenshots. This shift from the bovine to the ovine may seem innocent, but we're sure there's more to it than that. We don't know what sinister part the sheep will play, but who wants to lay odds it involves being shot out of a cannon?



Every heist needs sheep. Lots of sheep.



The walker units are looking pretty meaty.

Bomb, which actually turns targeted areas upside down, reverting back to normal in time for affected enemies to experience a sickening fall. Turreted vehicles will also play into the lunacy, with an interface that will immediately be familiar to *Giants* veterans.

blow them away. But first, please, take the time to look into the eyes of the Dr Moreau-reject Grunts, insane droids and, erm, Twiglets. Marvel at the unparalleled array of missions! (Well, there are 21.) Cover before the limitless arsenal! (OK, 17 weapons really, but who's counting?)

"Characters include a Scottish demolitions expert and a robot who's achieved inner peace through tea"

In fact, from the available evidence, *A&D* appears to be a big brother to *Giants* in more ways than one. The level designs, weapons and design sensibilities all bear the stamp of the highly creative Planet Moon team. The biggest change is that *A&D* sets adrift the notions of resource management in favour of full-bore action, though clever manipulation of your team mates will certainly be a prerequisite to success. The oddball characters all promise to be memorable too, as attention to detail is here in spades, with high-poly models seemingly designed to make you care... at least about how you

Thank the powers that be, also, for the fact *Armed & Dangerous* seems to be heralding a new age for the house that Lucas built. While all those *Star Wars* games keep the lightsaber-builders happy, it's been a long wait for those of us who were enamoured with the company's less glamorous, yet more satisfying titles. While there's no shortage of average, undergraduate humour in games today, really well-crafted undergraduate jokes are to be treasured, and this combination of talent looks like a shimmering well of unsavoury entertainment. Great action and great jokes? We can't wait. **PCZ**



The Shadow knows what evil lurks...

like Martin Bashir's turned his cameras on the Hussein family.

But never mind that – think of the glory! Why, the redemption value on all those spent shells alone could finance an army. Rumour has it that Roman is an *EastEnders*, and in the hands of anyone but LucasArts that might be cause for fear. But knowing what those capable hands did with the accents in *Grim Fandango*, here's hoping that this antihero won't emerge sounding like Johnny Depp in *From Hell*. Even better, the development chores are being handled by Planet Moon Studios, who, in the early days of GeForce powered enlightenment, produced the entertaining and slightly twisted *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

THE DRAWING BOARD

While the publisher is certainly putting the emphasis on armament, anyone who played *Giants* should remember the skewed humour behind the game just as well as its insane weaponry and multi-faceted characters, and that's what's really got us salivating about this one. While the carnage is all very well and good, putting the comic sensibilities of the house that published *Sam & Max Hit The Road* and *Grim Fandango* alongside the demonstrably bawdy humour of *Planet Moon* seems like a great idea.

The first batch of screens we've managed to bring you here demonstrate that *Armed & Dangerous* will take

advantage of up-to-the minute polygonal prowess, with detailed multi-level environments in which to make things go boom. Concept art reveals a world lying somewhere between that of Lucas and anime legend Miyazaki, with retro-styled robotic drones and majestic airships decorated with vanes and spires. Five types of environment will be in the final game, including lush forests, rain slicked mountains and snowy expanses.

And then there are the guns. Lots of guns. One has a forebarrel like the gaping maw of a shark, another, the Vindaloo Rocket Launcher, fires four projectiles guaranteed to make recipients feel incredibly uncomfortable. Regardless, all can be relied upon to deal out massive amounts of carnage. Of great interest is the Topsy-Turvy



How this fits in is anyone's guess.

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The English have some of the nastiest special abilities.



Very powerful weapons await at the top of each nation's technology tree.



The developers are aiming for high unit counts to create huge, epic battles.

Playing with the past...

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

The mind behind *Age Of Empires* is back with a new version of history and lots of silly accents. **Anthony Holden** sharpens his pike

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.stainlesssteelstudios.com
ETA Christmas 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the follow-up to *Empire Earth*
- New emphasis on fun, with loads of eccentric unit types
- Many unique civilizations, each with a range of special abilities
- Huge, frenetic battles
- Funny accents

CV

STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

Back in '97, RTS mastermind Rick Goodman helped make gaming history as lead designer on *Age Of Empires*. After that he left to form Stainless Steel Studios, which has released one game to date.

2001 *Empire Earth*. Taking the AoE formula and stretching it across the entire length and girth of human civilisation, *Empire Earth* was an ambitious 3D RTS that sold truckloads.

2003 Stainless Steel recently penned a multi-game deal with Activision, the first of which has now been revealed as *Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World*.

HISTORICAL strategy games are becoming way too serious for our liking. We were quite happy when Westwood sent Einstein back in time to assassinate Hitler, didn't bat an eye when Civ let us guard our sphinxes with machine guns... and yet countless dull RTSs still persist in trying to create the most correct and accurate version of the world's conflicts. And it's clearly gone far enough. Developers are so busy researching what knot the Nazis used to tie their boots in World War II and modeling Genghis Khan's left gonad to exact scale that it's just no fun any more.

On paper, *Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World* could be mistaken for another po-faced RTS history lesson. Straddling 1,000 years of history, from the Middle Ages through to World War II, the

game lets you play through history as one of several unique civilizations (including China, Korea, England, Germany and France), each with strengths and abilities based on meticulous historical research. Seeing the game in action, however, tells a very different story. Chinese wizards drawing lightning bolts from the sky like venerable X-Men, pestilential cow carcasses curling through the air on a visceral contrail... German 'blitzkrieg' attacks settling like a miasma over enemy troops. Forget realism – *Empires* is all about epic battles and uncompromising entertainment.

"It is a historically realistic game," insists Rick Goodman, mastermind of the *Empire Earth*/*Empires* series, "but we've focused on some of the most interesting aspects of history and chosen the most

FOCUS ON... CHINA

EACH OF THE NATIONS IN *Empires* HAS A NUMBER OF UNIQUE UNITS AND ATTRIBUTES. HERE WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE ANCIENT CHINESE HAD UP THEIR SLEEVES

While several of the playable sides in *Empires* are still under wraps, Rick Goodman took us through the ins and outs of a few of those that have been revealed, and none was more interesting than the Chinese. We've already mentioned a couple of their special abilities, but here's a few more to get you in the mood.

WHEELBARROWS "I'm sure you know that the Chinese invented the wheelbarrow," smiles Rick. "This allows the Chinese to gather more resources more quickly."

SABOTAGE The Chinese can disable enemy resource sites such as mines and quarries by blowing them up, seriously damaging rival economies.

MOBILITY "What really makes the Chinese interesting is their mobile buildings," claims Rick. "They have a mobile barracks – you can even train units while it's moving." This mobility makes the Chinese a slippery adversary on the battlefield.

INSTANT TROOPS If they're struggling to fight off a heavy attack, the Chinese can use a special ability called Hereditary Military Service to instantly train units. Handy.

WAR-KITE An ewok-like flying wing, the war-kite is the earliest air unit in the game. "It's based on historical research," insists Rick, "the Chinese actually used them for reconnaissance." In this case they can fly around and drop rocks too.

FIREWORKS The Chinese can set off fireworks on the battlefield, causing the enemy units to get scared and attack each other. The historical veracity of this technique could not be verified, but we'll take Rick's word for it.



The Chinese are a crafty bunch in *Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World*.

exotic units – based on things that actually existed – to make the game as fun as it can possibly be."

Of course, Rick is stretching the truth a little, as some of these units have a truly tenuous grip on reality – the Chinese magic powers for a start are clearly based on folklore, and we're not convinced about the German battlefield confusion curse either. But then this is the whole beauty of the game – it treats history not as a map but as a playground.

BRANCHING OUT

The other key advantage of this lax approach to history is that it allows the developers to build each playable nation from the ground up, using whatever weapons and abilities they see fit, with gameplay balance always foremost in mind. "Each civilization has a unique technology tree," says Rick, "with a number of special abilities that are unique to each nation. Take the British civilization in the pre-gunpowder age, for example. Apart from powerful knights, crossbowmen and guys with boiling pitch, the English have the ability to build special spike traps. The enemy cannot see them,

so I can entice them in, like so." With this, Rick lures some unwitting French horsemen into a line of traps, which spring comically forth from the ground in true Indiana Jones fashion, producing enough horsemeat to keep the French army fed for a month. It's a satisfying trick.



While the graphics can't quite match *Rome: Total War*, they're still a bit tasty.



You can pan, zoom and tilt the camera to your heart's content.

"For any historical RTS, the air, land and sea operations are all very important," continues Rick, "and another thing that makes the English unique is their strong and powerful navy. As a

are able to move through otherwise impenetrable forest to sneak up and launch unexpected attacks from behind." So Rick, you're telling us the German special ability is that they are sneaky?

"This is the whole beauty of *Empires* – that it treats history not as a map but as a playground"

special ability, one of their ships can always be designated as a flagship, turning that ship into a super-unit. If the flagship gets destroyed, you can simply designate another one, so you've always got one flagship to rely on."

SNEAKY SODS

OK, so Britannia rules the waves – seems fair to us. What about the Germans then, in say, World War II... Rick? "The Germans have strong submarines and Tiger tanks, as well as zeppelins, which are important for recon." Rick pauses to show us how zeppelins can be used to spot submerged subs, as well as functioning as bombers. "The Germans also have a special ability based on their 1944 ability at the Battle of the Bulge, and that is the 'Sneak Attack'. The Germans

Um, OK, what else? "Another German ability is to launch poison gas attacks with their bombers." Er, gas attacks you say? I think we'd better move on. What about China? "One advantage the Chinese have is that their citizens are much cheaper, they cost less to build, and they train a bit more quickly than other civilizations, which is a great economic advantage." OK, so life's cheap in China then? Er...

WHO FLUNG DUNG

Things could have gone bad at this point, as the game's 'historical realism' seemed to be rapidly devolving into a series of racial stereotypes, but luckily it was at about this time we noticed some of the accents in the game. They were, not to put too fine a point on it, ridiculous – blatant parodies verging on the Monty Python. Click on the Chinese troops and you get a deferential "Yes my mastah? Velly clever, velly clever." While with the Germans you get: "Vot are your orders? Schplendid!" Ve couldn't help but laugh.

You see, *Empires*, despite its claims of realism, actually follows the tradition of such classics as *Scottish Lugs* (see p146), trading primarily in stereotypes and historical one-offs. Luckily, it does so in a very deliberate, tongue-in-cheek fashion, often with hilarious results.

It is this playfulness, combined of course with the tried and tested empire-building gameplay and huge, epic battles, that's going to make *Empires* stand out from the crowd. The team has already proved their mettle with *Empire Earth*, and now they're cutting loose with a far more interesting project. It's already got a laugh out of *PC ZONE*, and that in itself makes it worth keeping an eye on. [E]

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Blizzard claims to be able to load new areas seamlessly. Say goodbye to zoning.



It's obvious a whole lotta love has gone into the design and look of the game.



WoW is Blizzard's first MORG, but they've years of experience with Battle.Net.



The Night Elves were recently revealed as a new playable race.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Blizzard
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.blizzard.com/wow
ETA 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Stylish graphics and a huge seamless gaming world, steeped in *Warcraft* tradition
- Simple and powerful interface
- Stands a good chance of becoming the world's favourite online RPG

Wow, check out the MORGs on that...

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

The hugely successful RTS series is turning RPG and going online. *Richie Shoemaker* gets the latest

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WORLD OF Warcraft, or 'WoW', to give it the truncated title favoured by Blizzard's press releases, is the first 'MORG' to come from the studio behind *StarCraft*, *Diablo* and of course *Warcraft*. MORG if you hadn't already guessed, is what Blizzard call a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, a now-familiar concept that seems brilliant in theory, yet one that most gamers refuse to embrace for one reason or another. Nevertheless, Blizzard is determined to eradicate the

usual turn-offs and ensure that as many of us as possible join them in the land of Azeroth, the setting for a decade's worth of *Warcraft* strategy games.

Apart from anything else, the one reason Blizzard might just succeed in enticing both the reticent and the online faithful is that, as with their strategy games, their aim is not to offer the biggest, most realistic world, but one that at its core is simple and satisfying.

STARS IN THEIR EYES

Though the entire team are huge MORG fans, they've taken as much inspiration from single-player games as they have from the likes of *EverQuest*.

The interface is clean and functional, yet appears to be very powerful – not something many MORG gamers will be used to. More

importantly perhaps, Blizzard is aiming to ensure that each and every player, despite being among a cast of thousands, is made to feel like they're taking a leading role in the world and the way its events unfold, rather than a bit part on the sidelines. This aspect is shown off best in the early part of

game. Locations are hugely diverse, with sprawling cities merging into barren arctic wastelands, and literally hundreds of dungeons, undersea caverns, wrecks and arenas to explore and expire in.

Standard issue player classes (fighters, wizards etc), weapons, spells

"Newcomers start off in a village where everyone knows your name"

the game, where rather than starting in some huge city with not a clue as to how to begin, newcomers start off in a small village where everyone knows your name, with missions that require the elimination of ravenous wolves rather than fluffy bunnies. As Allen Adham, Blizzard co-founder and spiritual leader on WoW says: "We want players to feel like heroes."

Quite apart from the stylish and powerful 3D engine, WoW looks sure to be an incredibly rich, varied and vibrant

and missions are supplemented by a whole host of *Warcraft*-issue items and creatures, from Dwarven Hunters with their blunderbusses and pet taming skills, to Night Elf druids and Orc Shaman. *Warcraft* fans will need no convincing, but seeing locations like Stormwind and Black Rock Spire and hearing the plans Blizzard have in store, it's evident the Californian developer is on track to deliver a stunning online experience. **[X]**





As ever, Blizzard is going out of its way to incorporate player feedback.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Blizzard
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.blizzard.com/war3x
ETA Summer 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Boats are back
- Five new heroes
- A new campaign for each race
- In-depth storyline that continues the quest from WC3



Nothing worse than a frozen throne in this sort of weather...



Four new solo campaigns to be had.



Lengthy beta testing should ensure another wonderfully balanced online game.

This seat's a bit parky... WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE

The fastest-selling PC game of all time is getting its first expansion pack and *Richie Shoemaker's* been digging for info

IF A GAME sells a million copies it is considered to be a huge success. So when the latest in Blizzard's strategy series sold in excess of a million boxes in the space of a week, the developers were probably quite impressed, not with the volume of course – since Blizzard is used to multi-million sales – but with the sheer speed at which gamers snapped it up. Mind you, considering *Warcraft's* long-suffering fans had to wait nearly eight years for the sequel, the haste with which they opened their wallets isn't so surprising.

Rather fortuitously for those veteran fans that are still alive, the wait for WC3's first add-on won't be quite as arduous or as lengthy. Due this summer, Blizzard is hard at work creating four new campaigns for *The Frozen Throne* that will follow on from those of the original game, with three Heroes searching for some trinket or other that will give them ultimate power and rid the world of evil. Or something like that – suffice to say the storyline is intricately

layered and compelling in the finest Blizzard tradition, but a lot less interesting on paper than it's sure to be when you play it first-hand. And who are we to spoil the fun? Interestingly, the Orc campaign dispenses with the need to find the titular icy shitter, Blizzard instead promising a pure RPG-style affair – no resource gathering and base building required or en masse slaughter to endure – something of a first for an RTS game.

The focus of *Warcraft III* was of course on its Hero units; specialist one-off troops

Ships are also making a welcome return, though only to the single-player game unfortunately, and warlords can now build shops and sell back items that they don't want. A bunch of other new units, items and item shops are also in place, all of them currently undergoing rigorous testing in the multiplayer betas. In addition, the new expansion will include an advanced toolset for players wishing to create their own *Frozen Throne* campaigns, including facilities for adding cut-scenes and voiceovers.

"Frozen Throne looks like it will complement Warcraft III perfectly"

that held special abilities, weapons and spells. *Frozen Throne* introduces a new Hero to each race, plus five Neutral Heroes, each of which will wield a dizzying array of magical attacks; from the Blood Mage who can summon a fiery phoenix, to what appears to be a pissed-up panda bear with the ability to gag his enemies with his alcoholic breath.

With its touches of humour, RPG leanings and frantic action, *Frozen Throne* looks like it will complement *Warcraft III* perfectly. It's doubtful whether WC virgins will be tempted in by such a heavily story-driven solo game, but the already brilliant multiplayer is only going to get better. Fastest-selling expansion pack ever? We wouldn't bet against it. **PCZ**

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Many of the locations will be familiar to Warhammer 40,000 fans.

Burn baby, burn!

FIRE WARRIOR

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Kuju
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE www.firewarrior.com
ETA Summer 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Set in the established Warhammer 40,000 universe
- 16 high-powered weapons
- 17 challenging levels in an atmospheric future universe
- The whole game takes place over the course of a single day

Rhianna Pratchett slaps on the factor 40 and gets ready to feel the heat

EVER FELT perplexed by mankind? Just not connecting with the human race? Well, you're not alone, because so do the Tau. But then they do have the excuse of being an Alien race in the Warhammer 40,000 universe. You, however, should get more fresh air and stop trying to smoke those banana skins.

The Tau may be a relatively new race in the Games Workshop/Warhammer 40K universe, but they're already the stars of their own computer game, Kuju's futuristic shooter *Fire Warrior*. The game sees you

taking on the role of a Tau warrior, one of the races stuck in the middle of an intergalactic battle between two huge forces, the Imperium and the Tryanid.

INSPIRED

Like most of its genre pals, *Fire Warrior* displays influences and features from a number of other hit FPSs. It employs a similar style of combat and defence as *Halo*, with shield generators and a maximum inventory of two weapons at any one time. Also, as executive producer James Brooksby explains, *Fire Warrior* dabbles in a bit of *Medal Of Honor* style atmosphere: "The first level is a homage to the Omaha beach landing in *Medal Of Honor*. You come out the back of your dropship and all the other ships are being

Rather unconventionally, all the events and 21 missions in *Fire Warrior* take place within a single 24 hour stretch. The day in question kicks off with you trying to rescue your captured Tau leader, The Ethereal Ko'Vash, captured by Imperium forces.

HAMMERED

As you progress through the game, you're taken through grandiose spaceships based on architecture from the Warhammer 40K world – which James describes as "10 mile long cathedrals in space" – to the vast and labyrinthine Imperium prisons. Along the way you can wield a variety of

"All the events and 21 missions in *Fire Warrior* take place in a single day"

blown away in the sky. You run out, everyone is dying in front of you, and you realise something has gone very wrong with the mission. *MoH* was an inspiration for us in terms of gaming atmosphere."

Kuju has also drawn from the likes of *Aliens Vs Predator* for a slightly slower, scarier atmosphere in some of the levels, with the action and pace varying noticeably from fast battlefield action and more tense, isolated gameplay.

suitably apocalyptic weapons such as the blast cannon and the pulse rifle, and meet 24 types of enemies and allies.

It's straight ahead, gung-ho shooter type stuff, but the developer promises a top-notch plot with a few twists and turns thrown in. And if that and the pedigree of the Warhammer world wasn't enough, there will be some quality voice acting from the likes of Brian Blessed, Sean Pertwee and Tom Baker. **EW**



Where's all the hammers then?



One day these levels will be full of space marines.



You play a member of the fire caste, the military wing of the Tau.

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The Next Generation of Star Trek shooters...

ELITE FORCE II

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Mark Hill enters the holodeck with an all-but finished build of a game that could put *Star Trek* firmly back on the gaming starmap

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.st-ef2.com
ETA June 20

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Moves the franchise from boring *Voyager* to classic *Next Generation*
- Explore the Enterprise, inside and out
- New weapons and new aliens
- Wide variety of settings
- Intense battles

CV

ritual
ENTERTAINMENT

RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Though it's had only one big game to its name, Ritual is well known in the gaming community.

1996 The company is formed with – in their own words – a “tribal model” under the name Hipnotic Interactive.

1997 The excellent *Scourge Of Armagon* mission pack for *Quake* puts Ritual on the map.

1998 After changing its name to Ritual, the company releases the original FPS *SIN* to massive acclaim.

1999 *Wages Of SIN* mission pack is released.

2000 Despite the busty heroine and excellent graphics, their third-person *Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K.* disappoints. They then turn mercenary, bashing out the forgettable *Blair Witch, Volume 3*.

2003 Back in the big time with *Elite Force II*, due out in June.



Do I detect a slight *Halo* influence?



Put away those devil's pillows, evil harlot.

CALL ME a purist, but there was something very wrong about the best *Star Trek* game available being based on one of its weakest TV incarnations. *Voyager – Elite Force* might have surpassed the plethora of mediocre-

atrocious *Trek* games we've had to put up with in the past, but that doesn't excuse having to listen to Captain Janeway between missions. So when it was announced that the sequel would cast off its matronly-skipped guise

and settle instead on the glowing baldness of one Captain Picard, the world cheered with enthusiasm. Well, I did anyway.

The only cause for concern might have been the more dubious move from



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Ahh, the good old scripted "an alien grabbed someone and took them" moment.



developer Raven to Ritual Entertainment, a company that hasn't produced much of interest since the ancient *SIN*. The use of the increasingly dated *Quake III* Arena engine was another area of worry. Having played the game to completion in its Beta form though, we can already confirm that *Elite Force II* is every bit as good as Raven's effort, and in some ways a whole lot better.

BORG STANDARD

In fact, the first thing that strikes you when you first play it, is just how similar to the first game this is, with all the small refinements and improvements you expect from a sequel. As before, you

command the elite Hazard Team, sent out to do all the violent, dirty jobs those alien-hugging Federation officers won't touch. The first mission works as a transition between ships, set as it is in the Borg sphere seen in the very last episode of *Voyager* before they finally reach Earth [Err, yeah, know it well... - Ed]. Unfortunately, the inside of a Borg ship isn't the best place to start a game: very small corridors, identical looks to the original (it almost feels like a cut and paste job) and enemies that have been so overused you can't be bothered to shoot them any more.

Things improve almost immediately though, as the story element kicks in



One of the moments when your choice affects the rest of the game.

"As before, you command the elite Hazard Team, sent out to do all the violent, dirty jobs"

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You and baldie, side by side, just as it should be.

and you find yourself consigned to a teaching job at the Starfleet Academy, a beautifully realised campus that you can explore at your leisure before being spotted by the eagle-eyed Picard. It's a shame more of the game doesn't take place here, as the outside locations under a pleasant blue sky would make an excellent – and different – arena for repelling alien invaders.

FREE ENTERPRISE

Nevertheless, the move to the Enterprise continues the feeling of freedom and exploration, although, like Voyager before it, it's a shame so much of it is reduced to corridors with doors that don't open. Despite the real voice of Patrick Stewart as Picard (listen out too for Dwight "Murdock" Schultz reprising his Barclay role as well as the great Jeffrey Combs), it doesn't really feel quite as it should, partly because Voyager's irritating Tuvok is the only other major character (taking a temporary post here now that Voyager has disbanded), and because the

Enterprise we all know from the TV series was destroyed a few films ago.

Still, your first mission inside Federation space puts you in classic episode territory: exploring a friendly vessel discovered drifting in space, with its crew either missing or dead. It's not quite *System Shock 2*, but the atmosphere builds up nicely as you discover bodies floating in the zero gravity and catch glimpses of whatever did the damage fleeing just out of the corner of your eye.

But elsewhere, atmosphere usually takes a backseat to pure action. Whether

"The move to the Enterprise continues the feeling of freedom and exploration"

it's crawling alien creatures, Romulans, Klingons or some of the other species (details of which we're forbidden to divulge), the job is to blast (or, even better, vaporise) them out of existence.



A ridiculous, unwieldy weapon if ever I saw one. Stupid Klingons...

The action takes place in several locations, expanding the original game's scope to include more away missions and outside settings. The best parts though, are the ones in familiar surroundings: battling some intruders on

much of your time is spent exploring alternative routes and finding ways to take down force shields. Because of this, the tricorder plays a much more prominent part, providing information on anything you want to scan, detecting trip-wires and cloaks and pointing you in the direction of the next objective.

IF YOU HIT HIM GO TO PAGE...

One of the best features in the first *Elite Force* (and one not all players realised was there) was the way certain actions forked the story slightly in two directions. So, for example, in one mission I was meant to rescue a fellow officer. I failed and received a bollocking from Tuvok, as well as reproaches from my teammates for the rest of the game. I thought it was just scripted to happen that way and that the rescue was in fact impossible. It wasn't until I went back much later that I realised it was possible, and that the outcome changed people's reactions from then on.

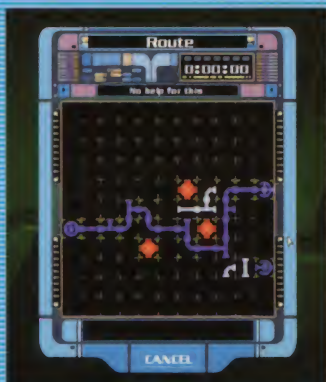
For a while I thought this had been removed from the sequel – after failing to rescue someone in the first mission it

MINI GAMES TO PLAY

FOR THAT LITTLE BIT EXTRA

Console developers have known for ages that a few sub-games can really enhance the main course, and it's nice to see Ritual pick up where it left off in *SiN* (a title packed with sub-games).

Apart from solving tiny slide-style puzzles whenever you use your tricorder to interact with computers to open doors, restore power and so on, there are a few hidden games that you will only unlock by finding secret locations in the map. Unlike the tricorder puzzles, they don't have anything to do with the main game, but are still a welcome addition to what can so often be a one-dimensional genre.



Not exactly taxing puzzles, but it's a welcome change of pace.

the bridge of the Enterprise with Picard by your side and taking a zero gravity spin on the outside of the ship's hull.

TRICORDERED

But while the whole thing is much longer than the first game, it doesn't often degenerate into non-stop mouse-button bashing, preferring instead to develop the story, add a few twists and generally keep you on your toes in more than the action department.

Not that there's anything approaching a proper, meaty puzzle (what game has anything like that these days?), but



You have to keep others alive at times.



Take a stroll on the Enterprise hull.

HOLOGRAM MAYHEM

MULTIPLAYER STAYS IN THE HOLODECK

Although it would have been nice to see the online side of *Elite Force II* move on from what was essentially a *Quake III* mod, there are at least some new modes to look forward to. The main one is the Bomb Disposal one, which is basically a plant the bomb scenario, though here both teams have a device to plant. There is a Modifier in which the job of the other team is simply to defuse though. Other Modifiers include Disintegration (aka instagib), Control Points, Elimination and Specialities, in which runes collected give you a specific character class (infiltrator, medic, technician, demolitionist, heavy weapons or sniper). Other than that there is the usual assortment of deathmatches and capture the flags.



The bots have improved, but we'll have to wait to see how it fares online.

was game over. But in fact, the device had been developed even further, with certain key moments offering a choice of dialogue responses that shape your relationship with other characters.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

It's subtle things like that – and the addition of some diverting sub-games – that make *Elite Force II* a bit more than another licensed hack job. However, these are the kind of details that will only be noticed by those looking for them. For the rest, *Elite Force II* is likely to be seen primarily as a straightforward, if enjoyable, shooter, with the small difference of sci-fi weaponry rather than the conventional machine-gun arsenal. This is quite a big difference you might think, especially when you consider that laser blasters, phasers and other futuristic arms (including those in *Voyager* and the *Jedi Knight* titles) are often deeply unsatisfying. How can you compare the sense of realism you get when a solid piece of metal thunders out of your gun barrel and ricochets off a wall into an enemy's yielding flesh with a bright beam of light that resembles nothing more a powerful torch beam?

Luckily, this is something Ritual has obviously taken into consideration, and the weapons in *Elite Force II* are by far the best of their type, beefed up for a greater feeling of solidity. Apart from the usual phaser and compression rifle, you get to play with an assault rifle (which has the nice punch of a shotgun to it), infinity modulator (the weapon from the first game that no Borg-fighter can do without), sniper rifle, grenade launcher,



Is it just us or do these Romulans have a bit of trouble holding their guns?

lightning gun (not only fires bolts of electricity, its secondary fire lets out a stream of gas that can be ignited for maximum burn value), quantum burst torpedo (a rocket launcher that can be guided) and radiation gun (the ultimate weapon here).

While there's plenty that will appeal to the general shooter audience – and not just a hardcore sci-fi fanbase – it's issues like these that make *Elite Force II*'s battle against its rivals more of a struggle. After all, how can a game that uses the *Quake III* engine and is closely modelled on the



There's no command interface and teammates are pretty independent.

first *Voyager* outing compete with giants like *Doom III* and *Half-Life 2*? The answer, of course, is that it doesn't even try. Ritual hasn't set out to change the face of the action genre or introduce any groundbreaking gameplay concepts. All it wants is to create a solid and enjoyable experience, with enough violence to keep shooters happy and enough story and details to keep *Trek* fans the same way (most will be content with the moment when you can ring Picard's door and hear the familiar shout of "Come!").

In that respect it looks like the developers are on course to achieve their target and, if the almost complete build we played is anything to go by, the June release date looks a dead certainty. There's a playable demo floating around the Internet so download that and decide for yourselves. [C]

THIS IS A MAN'S WORLD

BUT IT DON'T MEAN NOTHING WITHOUT...

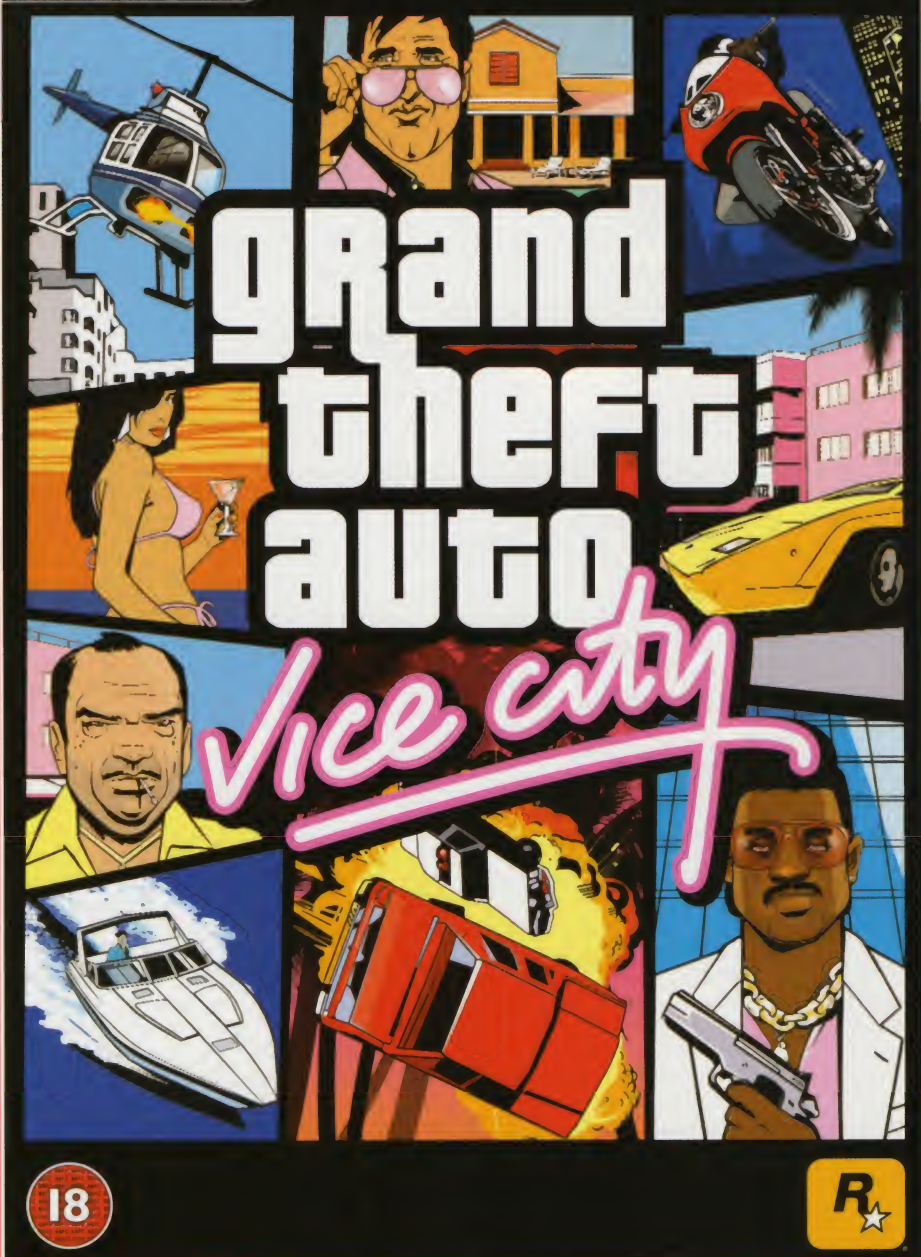
Voyager – Elite Force not only had a Margaret Thatcher helming your ship, it also offered you the chance to play as a male or female character, both called Alex Munro. This was really only an aesthetic choice, but it's still sad to see the option absent this time round. It's a lazy mistake, since it was definitely much more fun playing as a girl, especially when you got to see yourself in the mirror. Surely another skin and a different set of voice recordings would have been a small price to pay to keep her alive. Still, it does mean that Ritual has been able to develop your relationship with the other members of the Hazard Team without any gender misunderstandings.



Unfortunately, this time you can't play as a woman.

VIRGIN

PC CD-ROM



18



LOVES



The fastest selling PS2 release to date finally gets it's PC release. The PC version has enhanced features including improved graphics and sound, additional PC controls along with options allowing players to customise the game.

You play the role of Tommy Vercetti sent to Vice City after a long stretch in maximum security, by his old boss, Sonny Forelli. On arrival in the glamorous hedonistic metropolis of Vice city it appears all is well. He's been set up and left with no money and no merchandise. Sonny wants his money back, but the biker gangs, Cuban gangsters and corrupt politicians are standing in his way. Most of Vice City seem to want Tommy dead. His only answer is to fight back and take over the city himself.

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REVIEWS

THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON ALL THE LATEST PC GAMES

TIME FOR CHANGE...



■ SENIOR REVIEWS ED Martin Korda

▲ Just because a game carries a big brand name, doesn't immediately mean we're going to love it. Take, *Enter The Matrix* (reviewed on page 64) for example, a game which we initially had high hopes for before we finally got to play the game. Sadly, the need to get a game out by a set date, and on as many platforms as possible, as was the case here, is often a problem which afflicts many movie-licensed games.

Think about it though, how often do games slip several months, sometimes longer? With no such leeway, it should come as no surprise that so few movie-based games score very highly. But more often than not, it's not a case of a lack of talent on the developers' side, but a lack of time, coupled with often asphyxiating constraints from a slew of movie companies who think they know better when it comes to making a truly entertaining game. There are exceptions – Disney has allowed Monolith a huge amount of freedom with *Tron 2.0* for example – but they are rare.

If this industry is ever going to grow up and break out of the stereotype that it's an industry for geeks and kids, rather than being respected as the multi-billion dollar entertainment industry that it actually is, then it needs more companies such as Disney to trust in the talent of developers, and put aside their egos and arrogant assumptions that they know it all. Until that day, we'll be saddled with sub-standard movie-licensed games, which will sell in droves but ultimately disappoint the masses, while the developers have their reputations sullied by products which they've been forced to take on just to stay in business.

This industry treats many developers like dirt, and it's time things changed. If they don't, games, and in particular film-licensed games, will never fulfil their true potential.



Launched on the same day as the film, can *Enter The Matrix* take the world by storm? See page 64 for our verdict.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets

reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make then please email your views to letters@pczone.co.uk and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our top-end rig, the Area-51 from Alienware.



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

Elite Force 2 Alpha.



JAMIE SEFTON

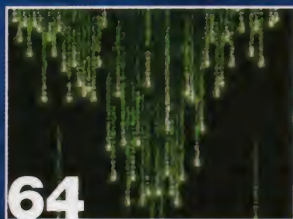
Painkiller Beta and Soldier of Fortune II multiplayer

What are you currently playing?

Who's your favourite Matrix character and why?

Trinity, because she's perdy.

Trinity, because she wear 'tight, PVC trousers.



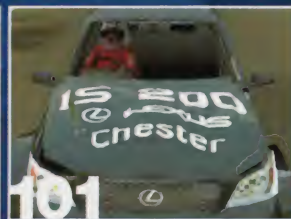
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ENTER THE MATRIX
Down the rabbit hole we go



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MARTIN KORDA

Day Of Defeat, Chaser and Viking Invasion.

Neo. I admire him for his great acting ability.



ANTHONY HOLDEN

Day Of Defeat.

It's a toss-up between spoon boy and rabbit girl. Or the thing they pull out of Keanu's navel



RHIANNA PRATCHETT

Ghost Master.

Trinity, because she manages to keep her PVC nice and shiny.



STEVE HILL

Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault

Persephone. You'll find out why if you play the game as Niobe.



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Eve Online.

Agent Smith, because I keep expecting him to turn up in drag.



STEVE O'HAGAN

Medieval: Total War - Viking Invasion

Agent Smith, but I can't say why.



"I say, push off."



Stop showing off will you, you flash git.

ENTER THE MATRIX

■ £39.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Shiny Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | www.enterthematrixgame.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 1.2GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

You've seen the film, now play the game. Steve Hill dives into another world

IN PERSPECTIVE

MAX PAYNE

Reviewed Issue 107, Score 90%
It may have stolen the Bullet-Time idea from *The Matrix*, but it did it first, and it did it better.

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

Reviewed Issue 98, Score 72%
Dual pistols, leaping about, amateur acrobatics – the comparisons are there.

THE HISTORY of games based on film licenses is littered with the fetid corpses of the mediocre. Often regarded as little more than marketing tools for the big picture, licensed games are frequently thrown together in slapdash fashion, seemingly for no other reason than to meet a deadline and bamboozle a gullible public. There are notable exceptions, but for all the brilliance of a *GoldenEye*, there are a dozen dismal *Men In*

Blacks waiting in the wings to sully the genre and snag the cash of the easily fooled.

Film licences don't come much bigger than *The Matrix* (you may have heard of it recently), and a big job needs a big man. Step forward Shiny Entertainment boss David Perry, who a few years ago actually turned down the opportunity to develop a game based on the original film, apparently believing it was going to be just another two-bit hacker movie. When the adopted Californian eventually saw *The Matrix*, the sound of

him kicking himself could be heard in his native Ireland. But he was given a reprieve and immediately agreed to a game based around this year's brace of *Matrix* movies (*Revolutions* is out in November).

Today's game is *Enter The Matrix*, although at a glance you could be forgiven for thinking that it is still 1999. With many of the environments presented largely in Bland-o-Vision, there is scarcely a nod to the graphical progress of recent years. The game's cross-platform release contains the answer, as this is essentially a PS2 game given a token spit and polish for the PC market. And while it's a marginal

improvement on the visuals provided by Sony's black box, suffice to say that the likes of *Unreal II* will not be unduly concerned.

VIDEO NASTY

But as we never tire of saying, it's all about the gameplay, and *Enter The Matrix* splices together a number of genres to create what could feasibly be described as an interactive movie. And if you thought that was a term that had been consigned to the 1990s, here's another one: Full Motion Video. A result of the CD boom, games in the middle of the last decade invariably came with laborious video footage of B-list porn actors interrupting your play time to deliver dialogue that was more wooden than a



Looks like he's got wood.



FMVs drive the story forward.

"Enter The Matrix splices together enough genres to create what could feasibly be described as an interactive movie"

snooker cue. The novelty soon wore off and purists complained it detracted from the immersion, eventually leading to the proliferation of the game engine cut-scene. The advent of DVD-ROMs sparked fears of a return, and while *Enter The Matrix* comes on CD, we can safely say that FMV is back nonetheless.

However, rather than throw a few talentless gimps in front of a blue screen, the actual actors and sets from the films are put to full use, with the game featuring over an hour of exclusive footage. Perhaps

wife of The Fresh Prince Of Bel Air. Their paths intertwine throughout *Enter The Matrix*, and while the claim it is two separate games is a bit rich, there are slightly different paths to take depending on your choice of character. Those paths are

negotiated

seeking to cover all bases, *Enter The Matrix* also has a slew of in-game cut scenes, 'advancing the narrative' on a regular basis. That narrative is a key part of the *Matrix* universe though, and the game comes with the bold claim of being written and directed by the Wachowski Brothers, the guys who hit pay-dirt with the groundbreaking 1999 film.

GHOST-FACED KILLAH

Alas, for *Bill & Ted* fans, that story doesn't revolve around Keanu Reeves, and you won't be donning Neo's ankle-length leather coat and bewildered expression. Instead, a pair of new characters are available, namely shit-kicking gun merchant Ghost, played by Anthony Wong, and the sultry Niobe, recognisable by her Craig David hair and played by actress Jada Pinkett-Smith,

in a third-person action adventure style, replete with all the gun-toting, high-kicking action one would associate with *The Matrix*. The big deal about the film was the revolutionary Bullet-Time, the slow motion effect appropriated by *Max Payne* a couple of years ago. Here it is known for some reason as Focus, and manifests itself in a similar fashion. Hold down your Focus key and you are thrown into a wibby-wobbly world where you can dodge bullets,

and an essential tool when faced with any kind of gathering of enemies. In fact, when not using Focus, the action is somewhat irksome, with bullets flying wide of the mark, and kung-fu moves reduced to a series of jerks.

The game allegedly features more than 3,000 moves, although in reality this is closer to three: punch, kick, and throw, variations added depending on which way you are facing.

DIRTY SLAPPER

There are a couple of nice actions, such as the ability to disarm an enemy, slap him on the head and then dispatch him with his own weapon. But while it looks great, you are sometimes left questioning whether you actually did anything, the whole move instigated by the press of a

thrust it into their heart, giving the illusion that you're playing the game rather than randomly pressing buttons.

Focus has to be used fairly sparingly, as it depletes over time, topping up of its own accord (slightly quicker if you indulge in a lot of hand-to-hand combat). This is also a formula that applies to your health, which may irk the majority of PC gamers.

Health packs are virtually rendered redundant, as rather than leaping hungrily upon them in the traditional fashion, health is replenished by simply waiting around for a few seconds, an extraordinary move that cheapens any sense of achievement. That's not to say that the game is easy, and some sections will have to be repeated 10 or 15 times before you get past them. It's a 'monkey see, monkey do' approach to gameplay that is

movie theme, it's generally about balls-out gunplay and hi-octane grappling, with stealth making only the briefest of appearances, such as the ability to sneak up behind someone and snap his neck with a satisfying crunch. Gore fans will be disappointed though, as the game doesn't feature even a drop of blood.

There are a couple of nice touches, such as being able to take cover behind a wall, wait for the enemy to loom into view and then unleash an arsenal of slow motion death. Enemies vary from security guards to SWAT officers to Agents, and when dealing with the latter, it's best to follow the advice of the film, and run.

The AI isn't always up to

Mensa standards though, with coppers occasionally to be found moonwalking into walls for no particular reason. There is a suggestion that development of *Enter The Matrix* simply had to be cut off so that the game could be released simultaneously with the film, a theory given credence by such anomalies as complete loss of sound during a cut-scene. We await the first patch with particular interest and anticipation.

REPEAT OFFENDER

The big action scenes can be quite satisfying, but there is a tendency towards repetition. This is slightly rectified by the intermittent appearance of rudimentary driving sections, although in reality they are little more than interactive cut-scenes. They differ depending on your choice of character, with Niobe taking the wheel, and Ghost often to be found hanging out of the window with a machine gun, the gameplay harking back to the on-rail shooters of yore. And as a treat for hovercraft fans, there's even

"The new characters are gun-toting Ghost and Niobe, recognisable by her Craig David hair"

walk up walls and administer boot leather to the temples of any nearby policemen.

Although *Max Payne* has long since stolen the thunder, it's still an impressive effect,

solitary key. This doubt reappears when grappling with vampires in the Chateau, as having slapped them around a bit your character will suddenly pull out a wooden stake and

exacerbated by the save game mechanic. In a further nod to the game's console roots, all save points are automated, and scattered about in a fairly haphazard fashion, sometimes quarter of an hour apart, but then occasionally appearing in-between minor cut-scenes. Die just before a tricky point, and you end up running through the same areas over and over.

As for the locations, many are taken directly from the films, although you'll be on familiar ground, ticking such boxes as Sewer, Dungeon, Airport and Generic Industrial Plant, for instance. Tasks often involve little more than getting from one place to another while eliminating any opposition, and in keeping with the action

HACKED OFF

I'M SORRY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND

Apart from the main action, there is also an interface that supposedly enables you to hack into your game and somehow change the settings, thus spookily mirroring the films and maintaining the illusion that it is all one big simulated world. But to be honest, it's all a bit confusing. The manual isn't much help either, offering only: "The rabbit hole is very deep, with many places to explore. You must have a previously saved game stored to begin hacking. After that, you're on your own." Thanks for that.



The hacking sections are unconvincing.



Bleedin' Goths. Thought we'd seen the last of them when *The Sisters Of Mercy* split up.



The obligatory exploding helicopter scene.



The in-car view is manageable, but it's not exactly *Colin McRae*.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

NONE OF IT'S REAL ANYWAY

The argument over Full Motion Video as opposed to cut-scenes using the game engine continues to rage long and hard among the gaming fraternity. Purists prefer the latter, citing that it provides a coherent whole within the structure of the main piece. Others, Korda for instance, like the real footage, perhaps seduced by the notion that it adds mainstream credence to a medium often derided for its artistic immaturity. *Enter The Matrix* offers the best of both worlds, with proper acting augmented by in-game cut-scenes. See if you can guess which is which.



Jada Pinkett-Smith and Anthony Wong



Niobe and Ghost.



The new series of *Come Dancing* received a mixed response.

the opportunity to pilot that big old ship out of the film.

Something of a mixed bag then, and one that comes with all the hallmarks of Shiny's ambitious approach. David Perry has often spoken about his desire to create a truly mainstream game, and with such a huge licence, this was an opportunity. But the oversimplification of the combat may deter the hardcore, while the control system requires a degree of manual dexterity that could preclude movie-dazed casual gamers. That said, similar shortcomings didn't stop *Tomb Raider* from being

a massive hit, and with the pistol-toting female character, back-flips and beam hanging, there are direct comparisons with that series.

DESERT OF THE REAL

In conclusion, it's fair to say that the various facets of the game are inferior to rival titles. There are many better shooting games available, as a beat 'em up it is found wanting, and were the driving sections extrapolated into a full game they would be roundly scoffed at. Similar accusations were levelled at minor French classic, *The Nomad Soul*, but



"I wouldn't stand there, mate."

the composite parts gelled together to create an enjoyable whole. The same is true here, and the idea is clearly to make you feel you are taking part in your own personal version of *The Matrix*. Given such a remit, it can't be dismissed as a total failure, and despite the lengthy spells of trudging about, some of the action sequences are undeniably exciting, despite the occasional cack-handedness and graphical shoddiness – square wheels, anyone?

"Some of the action sequences are undeniably exciting, despite the poor graphics"

MISSED OPPORTUNITY



Clumsy PC controls could have been avoided.

WALK, DON'T RUN

A sizeable howler, this one. When playing the game on one of these new-fangled Next Generation consoles, it's possible to walk around using the analogue stick, easing it forward slightly to break into a trot, with a full push enabling you to run like a bastard. No such luxury is afforded to the PC's default mouse and keyboard setup, which either has you standing still or running at full speed, thus precluding any notion of stealth, and forcing you to give your position away and indulge in extended fire-fights when you might have been able to simply skulk away.

Admittedly, stealth doesn't play a great part in the game, but for the sake of one key, it would have been nice to have the option. Yes, you could plug in an analogue controller, but by the time you've dicked about binding all the various buttons (Focus, punch, kick, jump, primary and secondary weapons), you might as well just get the PS2 out. Rubbish.



That's gonna make a few people late for work.

Thanks to the full involvement of the movie staff, the authenticity can't be questioned, and for true fans of the films it's essential, if only for the exclusive footage. Absolute freaks might even be able to decipher the storyline – which will apparently make more

sense after viewing the two new movies – but in the meantime seems to involve little more than protecting other rebels while notching up an impressive body count.

Somehow, *Enter The Matrix* manages to reduce one of the most impressive film series of



The sniper rifle is often more trouble than it's worth.



SECOND OPINION

MARTIN KORDA

I couldn't agree more with Steve. All of my fears about this being a predominantly console-orientated game have come true. After all the hype about the countless martial arts moves you'd have at your disposal, you're left feeling like you have little control over five of them, let alone 3,000. It's hard to navigate your characters without an analogue stick, and the sub-games feel pitifully tacked on. However, on the plus side, I loved the Bullet-Time mode, sorry 'Focus', and being a sucker for FMVs (probably the only one left on the planet), the one hour of well-acted video footage got me all glowy inside. Either that, or the chilli I had for lunch was weaving its molten-magic on my bowels. It was definitely one of those two. Oh and it's way too short as well. One weekend, and it's all over.

recent times to the status of a B-movie, albeit an occasionally mindlessly enjoyable one. When the music and the action kicks in, it's undeniably intense, and the Focus/Bullet-Time is still pretty cool, even if it does enable you to see that your blows aren't actually making contact. The mixing of FMV with regular cut-scenes is a little incongruous, but if nothing else the 'story parts' do at least give you a break from the relentless action.

The NME recently declared that if *The Matrix* were an album, it would be AC/DC's *Back In Black*. Praise scarcely comes higher, but the same unfortunately can't be said of the game. If *Enter The Matrix* were an album, it would probably be *Now 54!* – granted, some standout moments, but a lot of filler. [C-]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Authentic
- ✓ Professional acting
- ✓ Impressive 'Bullet-Time'
- ✗ Clearly a console game
- ✗ Repetitive
- ✗ Buggy

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Enter The Charts

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GHOST MASTER

■ £29.99 | Pub: Empire Interactive | Dev: Sick Puppies
ETA: May 23 | www.ghostmaster.com

REQUIRES Pilli, 128Mb RAM and a 3D card
DESIRES P4 1.5GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 3D card

Rhianna Pratchett plays ghost mistress

MOST PEOPLE

spend their bank holiday weekends wallpapering the spare room, shampooing the dog or tackling that weedy patch by the shed. I spent mine making the walls bleed, the earth swallow luckless mortals, and the toaster dance like it was possessed by Michael Flatley. And it's the most fun I've had with a game in ages.

The game in question is *Ghost Master* from Oxford-based developer Sick Puppies, and the premise revolves around you playing the role of an undead civil servant in charge of a team of spooks sent into the town of Gravenville to sort out some otherworldly problems.

WHO'S THAT GHOUL?

There are very few games out there that *Ghost Master* can be accurately compared to. The blend of sim, strategy, adventure-puzzler and RPG really do make it a unique experience, which is a rare quality these days. If you really want comparisons, then try *Freedom Force*, which has a similar style of team gameplay and points attribution, and Bullfrog games such as *Theme Hospital* and *Dungeon Keeper 2* for the shared humour value. And, before you start worrying, despite first glances it's nothing

like *The Sims*. It's the anti-Sims.

The game's structure is based around 14 scenarios in various haunted locations from a seemingly normal family home, to a huge multi-floored hospital and an asylum. In each location you have a primary objective, which may be simply to scare all the mortals or to nudge them towards helping



INPERSPECTIVE

THE SIMS

Reviewed Issue 87, Score 86%
If what you're really hankering for is a life of saving up for bedside tables and juggling the sanitary requirements of burbling virtual people, then *The Sims* is the place to start. Sadly, gameplay innovation has been muted by endless expansion packs.

FREEDOM FORCE

Reviewed Issue 115, Score 82%
Similar team-play structure here, but this time with a bunch of spandex-clad superheroes in a 3D destructible world. Much more of a strategy action title, with lots of "Kapows!", "Zonks!" and general comic-book shenanigans.

"The blend of sim, strategy, puzzler and RPG make it a unique experience"



The darkling, one of the most powerful ghosts in the game.





They really don't stand a chance.

An invitation to an infidelity.

you solve different puzzles. Alongside these are secondary goals which involve assisting various local ghosts. Your performance generates points which are converted into gold plasma that's used to buy new powers for your ghosts in the Ghoul Room.

RENTAGHOST

There are 47 ghosts in the game, some which you are given automatically, and others which you have to rescue. These include Bridgit the jilted bride who wants you to uncover infidelities in the hospital she works in, Hard Boiled the chicken poltergeist who needs protecting from ghost hunters, and Blue Murder the female cop who wants you to help her find the bent cop who set her up. The ghosts all divide up into six main families: sprites, disturbances, elementals, vapors, frighteners and terrors. Each family has various sub categories that often share or can gain access to, similar haunting powers. As you would expect, the more you use a particular ghost, the more experienced they become, allowing you to more specifically instruct them on what powers to use, on whom and when.

The family a ghost belongs to not only decides the type of powers they possess, but also where they can be used in the mortal realm. That's right, you can't just bung them in willy-nilly. They all have various objects or



Sleepwalkers are protected from being scared.

places that they can be bound to. Spooks like Boo, Quiver and Wendel can be bound anywhere indoors, making them very useful when chasing mortals around. Others can be bound to things such as murder sites (apparitions) electrical objects (gremlins) children (poltergeists) and sleeping people (sandmen).

FEARFUL STRATEGY

This is where the strategy comes in, and it's much more advanced, as well as being a lot more fun, than anything you're likely to find pushing a tank/soldier/monster round the typical virtual RTS gaming world. This is because you have a limited number of ghosts, a limited amount of places they can go, access to a huge number of powers, various ways you can complete certain tasks, plus a finite amount of

plasma. The latter is the substance that's generated whenever mortals get scared.

As well as slowly depleting over time, it also gets used up every time you place a ghost in the mortal world or invoke a power. So your ghosts end up basically working like a tag team, zipping in and out doing the scaring needed to get the plasma flowing, allowing more impressive powers to be cast and more ghosts to gain access to the mortal realm.

If this sounds a tad complicated, don't worry – it isn't. What is a little tricky though, is trying to directly manipulate mortals, as to do this you need your victims to be clear-headed. Which means you end up having just as many frustrations from mortals being too scared than not being scared enough. For example, in one scenario you have to get a group of students to read an incantation from a book. First you need to help them find the location and then the tome itself. But the really annoying part is trying to scare away a nutty professor without spooking the students to the point where they no longer want to do the deed.

EYE CONTACT

Ghost Master is very much a game you play with your eyes. OK, you play most games with



Moonscream versus the medium, no contest!

"The strategy is a lot more fun than pushing a tank/soldier/monster round a map"

your eyes, but in this case the clues to see if your dastardly deeds are working are mostly visual. There are also mini in-game cut-scenes when anything particularly note-worthy happens. Although these are not very pretty, they're very useful in giving you some idea of what to do next, and you'll be thankful for their prompting, especially in the harder levels. Also of help when negotiating *Ghost Master's* unfamiliar gameplay territory is the smooth and easily negotiated 3D engine and the mortals' AI, both of which have obviously been worked on a

great deal. There are quite a few minor collision issues between characters and objects, especially the closer in you get, but nothing that's too offensive on the eyes or which impacts on the gameplay to any real extent.

Powers also work the way they should (although it would have been handy to have an area in the Ghoul Room where you could test different powers out beforehand) and mortals react more or less in a predictable way to your powers. Apart from some general running about, arm waving and camp John Inman-style walking, mortals also

MISSED OPPORTUNITY (O)



A spook editor would have been a great feature.

CREATE YOUR OWN SNEEZING MISS POPOV GHOST? UNFORTUNATELY NOT IN GHOST MASTER

Whether you're a mod-head or not, editors are becoming more and more important in constructing the ideal gaming package, and these days a single-player campaign on its own looks a bit bare without an editor or multiplayer mode to add in a bit more longevity. Although *Ghost Master* doesn't suit a traditional editor, something akin to the basic skin, stats and skills tweaker that *Freedom Force* shipped with would have benefited the game. Everyone likes a bit of extra audience participation, and creating your own ghosts, specifying their powers and fetters would have been an extremely desirable addition.

HIT 'EM WHERE IT HURTS

UNLOCK THE MORTALS UNCONSCIOUS FEARS FOR MAXIMUM SCARE VALUE

You can just wade in hell for leather with whichever powers you like the look of, but if you want to gain the points, and thus that precious gold plasma, then you'll need to be a bit more devious. Every mortal has conscious and subconscious fears, and once you know them you can scare them much more effectively. Powers like Taste Aura can tell a mortal's conscious features, while certain ghosts can delve into the unconscious mind. Sandmen, like Hypnos, bind to sleeping people and can reveal that person's unconscious fears, which could be anything from blood, to certain noises. Once you have that information you can target your powers appropriately and really do some serious mental damage.



Hypnos the wonder horse, well, half of one.



The more mortals nearby the more scare points up for grabs.



The soldiers in Full Mortal Jacket are a tough bunch to scare.

display their reactions to your efforts with coloured circles and icons that appear around them when they're scared. Every mortal has their own terror, belief and madness level which you'll need to target to use your spells effectively. For instance, if you cast belief spells, mortals will have blue circles around them briefly, and their belief gauge will go up and consequently terror powers will have more potency.

ALIVE AND KICKING

While you're doing all this observing, you might want to take note of the superb amount of detail Sick Puppies has managed to cram in to each scenario. It's absolutely everywhere. The spells look great as you cast them (and here's where the higher end graphics cards pay off), especially when you've got several ghosts on the go. The mortals also have their own visual details, such as swinging their legs, tapping their fingers or falling asleep when they're bored. They argue with each

other, they stress out, they go to the toilet, they pop outside for a breath of fresh air – and there are a hundred other things that really make the scenarios live and breathe.

Each mortal has their own name (many of which are a mixture of sci-fi/fantasy actors and characters) and a bio, which again add to the general giggle factor of the game. It's packed with film references, from the titles of the scenarios – Full Mortal Jacket, Deadfellas, Phantom Of The Operating Room – to slightly more subtle nods. The patients in the hospital all have the same surnames as the marines in *Aliens* and (bare with me on this) the first names of the actors that played them. Plus, all their medical complaints are related to the way the marines acted or died in the film. So we find Bill Hudson, delirious

on his current medication, muttering "game over man... game over..." Ingenious.

LONE RANGER

As I mentioned before, there's very little to compare *Ghost Master* to, so it's not obvious what the game is 'missing'. Some kind of multiplayer would have been nice, but then again finding something that would work really well using the *Ghost Master* world would have probably taken as much time as creating the original game. And although you can replay all your previous levels again in search of higher scores, an editor, akin to the hero-creation feature in *Freedom Force*, would have also added more longevity to the game (see Missed Opportunity, opposite page).

Another aspect that *Freedom Force* did well with that *Ghost Master* doesn't quite achieve, was the way it brought out the personalities of the team members and gave them a group dynamic, which was achieved mainly through cut-scenes and character bio pics. *Ghost Master* does have in-game engine scene-setters, and although you revisit locations and see the same mortals popping up, between mission cut-scenes (especially if they could have been made to the standard of the opening movie) would have helped the scenarios hang together better. And some further work could have gone into developing your new ghosts' characters and personal story once you free them to join your team.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Nevertheless, *Ghost Master* remains a great game for many different reasons. The paramount one is that it's different – it displays innovation and imagination in an industry that can often be accused of putting the almighty dollar before genuine creativity. It's well put

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

SOMETIMES THEY FIGHT BACK

These mortals aren't a totally stupid lot, you know? The rumours of your ghastly doings have got around and now they're going to bring in the big boys. Actually, there are big girls as well. Yes, *Ghost Master* is an equal opportunities establishment for those gifted with paranormal tinglings. In *GM* you'll have to face down the likes of teen witches and *Ghostbuster*-esque spook hunters who have the power to banish your ghosts from the mortal realm. However, if your minions can give them a suitable scare while they are in mid banish, then they might just save themselves from eternal damnation. OK, so maybe not that, but at least being kicked out of the game for that mission.



Back off bitch!



SECOND OPINION

CHRIS ANDERSON

Ghost Master is one of those games you either love or hate, depending not only on the kind of games you like, but also on the kind of player you are. As Rhianna says, you'll need to be patient to get the most from it. Consequently, many won't last long enough to see the later levels, which are highly playable and a lot more engrossing than first impressions might have you believe. As a strategy game, it challenges on many levels, and as a work of innovation, it speaks for itself and plaudits are due to Sick Puppies for biting the bullet and trying something new. But the nature of the gameplay means *Ghost Master* is a 'try before you buy' title, and for this reason I'd recommend you take a look at the demo (which we'll hopefully have on our discs next month) before parting with your cash.

together and easy to negotiate. It's a lot of fun, not just relying on slapstick toilet humour, but full of well researched details that will raise a smile with practically anyone who's ever watched a film in their life. But it won't be for everyone, as it does require a lot of patience to really get the most out of it.

When you're breaking new ground with a game you're taking a big risk because your target audience hasn't really been established yet, and hardcore gamers (yes I'm talking to you) can be notoriously fickle about straying from their preferred genre. Is it worth deviating from your preferred path? Yes, definitely. You only have one gaming life to lead so take the risk with *Ghost Master* and make sure it's an extraordinary one. [A]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Innovative
- ✓ Well structured and detailed
- ✓ Full of imagination
- ✓ Great fun to play
- ✗ No multiplayer or editor
- ✗ Graphical glitches

87

Spookily good



Scoffing \$60 worth of sushi keeps your Sims in top form.

THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR

■ £14.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Maxis |
ETA: May 23 | www.thesims.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card

DESIRES Any PIII or better, 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

**REQUIRES
ORIGINAL
THE SIMS**

It's not a lifestyle Keith Pullin knows, or wants to know, in yet another woolly Sims expansion pack

HOW EXACTLY do you become a superstar? Do you 'do a Winona' and nick a sack-load of designer dresses from a posh Beverly Hills boutique, get busted and then feebly claim a director told you to do it as research for an upcoming film role? Or, do you 'do a Robert' and shove as much Colombian marching powder as you can up your nose, only to be raided by the feds while prancing around a hotel room in a figure-hugging superhero costume with eyes like saucers?

Obviously you should do both. If it means 480 hours of community service, or living in

a rehab centre for the next year then so be it. All publicity is good publicity in the bizarre world of showbiz.

So, to find *The Sims: Superstar*, the sixth expansion pack of the most successful game series ever, totally ignoring

them with *The Sims* trademark loon gibberish soon becomes tedious. There really are only so many A-List arses you can lick before extreme irritation with everything from the sound of their voices to the flaky AI sets in. To gain pleasure from

"Where are the drugs, feuds, court cases, car crashes and swimming pool tragedies?"

such ignominious (yet enormously amusing) behaviour and opting instead to simulate something akin to the squeaky clean existence of a *Songs Of Praise* presenter is a major disappointment.

THE FAME GAME

Gameplay mostly revolves around singing karaoke and miming in sushi bars, which is hardly blockbuster material. Likewise, frequenting all the favoured haunts of Studio Town's (*The Sims* equivalent of Hollywood) musicians and actors in an attempt to befriend

Superstar you have to be prepared to accept that stardom is not only achieved, but actually sustained by sitting in a jacuzzi chatting about shoes with Avril Lavigne.

If you live in a happy, fluffy land of Barbie dolls and childhood dreams, then *Superstar* will fit very nicely into your perception of fame. Yet, for most of us the term superstar conjures up an entirely different image. Where are the smut, drugs, feuds, court cases, car



"Who gave that woman a mouth? Well, who was it?"



Studio Town in all its 16-Bit high-colour glory.

crashes and swimming pool tragedies? With five other perfectly pleasant expansion packs, why, just once, couldn't Maxis have been a little daring?

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

On the other hand why should Maxis care? Fans of the series will buy *Superstar* regardless of what this review, or any other review says. In fact,

why bother reviewing it at all? I could be out playing golf right now... In fact, I could be out playing golf, dressed as a nun (in a stolen habit of course), smoking an enormous joint, churning up greens in my electric buggy, and eventually end up being chased down the fairway by angry green keepers with bats.

But then this is how I choose to live my life. It's up to you and your Sims how you live yours. [E]

INPERSPECTIVE

THE SIMS: UNLEASHED
Reviewed Issue 122, Score 78%
Oh, look! You can buy pets and watch as they destroy your Sims' precious home. We must have one. Oh, please mummy! Can we? Can we?

THE SIMS: HOT DATE
Reviewed Issue 111, Score 71%
Find your Sim their ideal partner in this dating expansion pack.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ A new neighbourhood to explore
- ✓ Some new objects
- ✓ You can still wall the annoying bastards in
- ✗ Should have been more 'adult'
- ✗ Still looks shite
- ✗ Incredibly repetitive arse-licking gameplay

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Super simplistic



Strategy's finest hour.



We'll never get tired of such sights of savage splendour!



Get close to castle walls and have boiling oil poured over your troops.

MIDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR VIKING INVASION



REQUIRES
ORIGINAL
MIDIEVAL:
TOTAL WAR

£19.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: The Creative Assembly |
ETA: May 9 | www.totalwar.com/community/viking.htm

REQUIRES PIII 350, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card
DESIRES PIII 1GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

Total War enters the Dark Ages. Steve O'Hagan shines some light on the expansion pack of the year

DON'T FIGHT it – it's natural to get excited over an expansion pack for one of the greatest strategy games the world has seen. Another chance to conquer vast swathes of territory and fashion a medieval empire, to lead armies onto the field of battle and crush fleeing peasants under the iron-shod hooves of your knights' war horses. You've gotta love it.

The Viking Invasion offers owners of *Total War* two things – a re-fresh of the existing Europe-wide campaign in the form of new units and playable nations, and an all-new campaign set in the British Isles. Re-winding to the Dark Ages, circa AD790, the new campaign sees a Britain torn between native Celtic tribes and various invaders. So among the eight rivals, in the north we see the Scots and Picts vying for position, in the South we have the Saxons and Mercians squabbling over the division of the spoils, and in the west the Irish and Welsh cling to their toe-holds on their native lands. Add

to this melting pot a stream of Norse invaders from Scandinavia, and apart from proof of what mongrels we Brits are, you have a recipe for wanton blood-letting.

ONE-ARMED BANDITS

The new campaign features more primitive units and buildings. Though many units are generic from the main game, such as spearmen and archers, the different factions bring plenty of unique units to the slaughter. Welsh bandits are the masters of camouflage and the ambush. Saxon Huscarls are metal-clad swordsmen that cleave through spearmen and peasants with ease. The fierce Viking Berserkers are small bands of psychos and charge at anything they see.

The novelty of having the familiar territories of the UK to wage war over counts for a lot. Frustrated Welshmen can re-write history by leading their warriors to the gates of London. Proud Irishmen can expel the

foreign invaders from their lands, and irate Scots can do what their football team could not and defeat the Faroe Islanders on their home turf.

Within the tight borders of the UK, the campaigning feels all the more savage. Territories change hands repeatedly, civil wars spread like wildfire, and just when you think you've pacified your borders, a fleet of longboats full of savage Vikings beaches on your coastline.

ORGAN GRINDER

For those interested in returning to the Europe-wide campaign of *Medieval*, the Hungarians, Sicilians and Aragonese are now all playable factions, and there is a sprinkling of new units such as the elite Russian Druzhina cavalry and the devilish organ gun. It's not enough to make us want to play it all through again in single-player, but it adds nice variations for multiplayer battles.

As far as the actual game system, other than an improved reinforcement management

system and the introduction of boiling oil and flaming arrows to sieges, there's not much here other than invisible tweaks you'd get from a patch off the net.

So, while the game remains much the same, the Viking campaign is just what the doctor ordered – a new map, buildings and units, all tied up with a dose of local rivalry. All of which should go a long way to tiding us over until *Rome: Total War* arrives. **PCZ**



This is going to get nasty.

"The Viking campaign is just what the doctor ordered"

INPERSPECTIVE

WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES
Reviewed Issue 129, Score 85%

If you're after a more mythical 3D RTS, then this strategy epic, featuring fully tactical landscapes and some great AI generals, is the best alternative out there.

WARCRAFT III

Reviewed Issue 119, Score: 85%
If you're after a great story and more simplistic build-and-rush gameplay, then *Warcraft III* is your friend.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Great new campaign
- ✓ Old campaign gets a re-fresh
- ✓ The battles feel even more evocative now they're in Britain
- ✓ It's the best strategy game around, dammit!
- ✗ Still no multiplayer campaign

88

Armchair Feudal Lords rejoice!



Even with the grenade blast's help, William was never going to clear the hand rail.

Stop shining that gun muzzle in my face.

CHASER

■ £34.99 | Pub: JoWood | Dev: Cauldron
ETA: June 27 | www.chasergame.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card
DESIRES P4 1.4GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

Chase meh, chase meh, ooooh chase meh boys. *Martin Korda* plays hard to get in this futuristic, old-skool shooter

INPERSPECTIVE

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Reviewed Issue 122, Score 93%

If you're looking for some stealth with your shooting, then Monolith's perfectly-paced offering is for you. With great AI, a superb engine and some laugh-out-loud touches of humour, you can't go wrong.

MAX PAYNE

Reviewed Issue 107, Score 90%

If you prefer third-person games and want to experience Bullet Time at its best, then check out this excellent if overly short blast-fest.

HERE'S ONE

for you. What would you do if you woke one morning to find yourself on a rapidly collapsing space station parked on the earth's hard-shoulder, your memory blank, a dead body lying next to you and a gang of armed men baring down on your hospital bed with intentions on your life?

- A) Cry
- B) Shit your pants
- C) A+B
- D) Somersault over the bed, dive for cover, run out of the room, rip out an assailant's

spine, steal his weapon, escape to earth and become embroiled in a gang war which will eventually see you travelling to Mars and taking part in a battle for freedom against a tyrannical corporation?

I know, it's a tough one, so take your time. But while you're mulling over your options, let me introduce you to John Chaser who'd take option D any day of the week. Or at least, that is, the specific day of the week that you decide to start playing this future-based FPS.

Straight from the off, when your eyes flick open, blinking violently as you scan your surroundings (generated by Cauldron's stunning CloakNT engine), you're embroiled in a fight for survival, trying to piece together your forgotten past from the flashbacks which torment your mind as you stumble towards an unclear future.

AND THEY'RE OFF

The enemy hits you, again and again, like a pneumatic drill-mounted boxing glove, never

giving you a moment to rest, to relax, to fully make sense of what is happening. And by the time you reach your evacuation pod and make your long journey down to the earth's surface, you're left in no doubt about *Chaser's* (that's the game's, not the character's) intentions.

This is an old-skool, boot it and shoot it bloodbath, action-packed to the back fillings with unrelenting fire-fights, interspersed with lengthy cut-scenes, which introduce and develop a world you



Some of the character models look incredible.

FLASH BEFORE MY EYES

WHERE AM I? WHO AM I? WHAT AM I DOING HERE?



That Stone bloke's not much of a looker is he?

Chaser, if you want to get all pretentious about it, is a journey of discovery. Over the first few levels, you're given the odd hint, strange flashes of recollection clouding your in-game vision as snippets of your past pop into your head. All you know is that you need to get your arse to Mars and find an apparently evil soldier called Stone. The flashbacks are rationed superbly throughout, at first scaring the life out of you as they jump out of the screen in the middle of a level. They never give too much away, though, meaning you're always left guessing as to who you really are. Sadly the plot suffers somewhat as a result, as you're sometimes left utterly confused as to what's actually going on.



The Mars missions are some of the best in the game.

have no prior knowledge or memory of.

And it doesn't get any easier, either. Once on earth things don't really look any rosier, as you find yourself in Montack city in a neighbourhood so dilapidated that you instantly wish you were in Bognor Regis instead. OK, maybe not that bad. But close.

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

What's worse, everyone seems to know who you are – your face is all over the news like a spilt cup of coffee, and those who

aren't shooting at you are trying to recruit you to shoot other people for them. Confused? You will be. But it will start making a little more sense as the campaign unravels, and as more and more flashbacks provide you with snippets of your past. Sadly, though, the plot never quite gels, its paradoxical propensity for keeping you guessing while at the same time trying to fill in some of the blanks often leaving swathes of confusion flapping around in a near-nonsensical gust.

The plot itself is, err, how to put this – 'heavily influenced' by sci-fi films. Or is that 'shamelessly ripped off'? See if you can make the connections.

You've lost your memory and end up fighting for freedom on Mars against an evil corporation (*Total Recall*), with undertones of human cloning (*Attack Of The Clones*) and you're constantly being chased (*The Running Man*). Of course it could just be a coincidence (cough, NO!). Hey, that was a cough, OK, I wasn't trying to tell you the answer.





And if you ever don't use deodorant again...

Honest. As if someone would do a thing like that.

So, onto the action itself, and, as you may have guessed, there's plenty of it. Underpinning the game is a reliance on twitch trigger hammering, straight out of the days of *Doom*, with a fat dose of puzzle solving thrown in to really get the nostalgia glands oozing. But just as you start to feel the novelty of the non-stop shoot-out wane, *Chaser* throws up an odd change of tempo, in an attempt to drag you away

from the challenging AI – which, although erratic on occasions, ducks and hides and runs and weaves to avoid your bullets while attempting to fill you with its own quota of lead – and challenge you in more subtle ways.

SILENT BUT DEADLY

And so you'll find yourself manning a tower with a sniper rifle, navigating underwater ship graveyards, dodging cameras on recon missions and running

like a hyperactive baboon as you try to escape, unarmed, from would-be captors.

But none of these, along with a somewhat tacked-on Bullet Time mode called Adrenaline Mode (an excellent survival aid to have in the game's more manic moments), ever manage to satisfy you fully, often bringing you to the brink of excitement without ever pushing you over the edge to a satisfactory climax.

"You're looking at one of the most infuriatingly challenging shooters of the new millennium"

Weapons are kept simple, an assortment of machine guns, sniper rifles and grenade launchers dressed up in varying metal guises. While each one handles fairly differently, you'll generally find yourself relying on your favourite sniper-scoped machine gun, something instantly versatile for close and long-ranged confrontations. Within a few levels you'll have mastered its kicks and magazine capacity as you drill yourself into an unstoppable killing machine.

IT'S A BITCH

At least... that's the plan. More often than not, you'll end up dead, because this isn't your average, finish-in-a-day shooter. Even on the easiest setting, there's countless hours of gameplay – despite the abundance of health packs and the small amounts of damage the enemy inflicts at this level.

You have half a second to say your goodbyes.

Crank up the difficulty to medium, or, if you're totally mad, hard, and you're looking at one of the most infuriatingly challenging shooters of the new millennium, one that'll have you slapping the quick-load key into oblivion well before the final cut-scene fades from your blood-soaked monitor.

VIRGIN SUICIDES

But while the difficulty will have you swearing with frustration like a 40-year-old tourette's-afflicted virgin, it's the often endless and brain-liquefying corridor exploring required to find a key or important room that will have you moaning like a pensioner who's just been overcharged by a penny in Tesco. A bit more in the level variation department would have been handy.

So, the £34.99 question. Is *Chaser* worth your 3,499 new



SECOND OPINION

STEVE O'HAGAN

Solid. Solid as a rock. That's *Chaser* for you. Not a groundbreaking next-gen FPS full of clever physics and emotive facial animations, but a good example of an all-out action PC shooter.

There's a bunch of satisfying weapons, some awesome environmental damage effects and impressive AI. OK, so the Bullet Time feature didn't take much imagination to slap in – and is of dubious effect in an FPS – and there are no tactical subtleties involved, such as ordering around teammates. But looking at the other shooters released of late, there's not a hell of a lot that competes if you're simply looking for some straightforward single-player carnage.

disbelief. And the excellent engine, despite only running at 65 per cent capacity here, will have you cooing in delight like a pigeon in a breadcrumb factory.

So there you have it – it's time for decisions. You've heard the arguments, you've played the demo, and as one final pointer, in case you're still not sure, here, have a score... [X]

MISSED OPPORTUNITY (O)

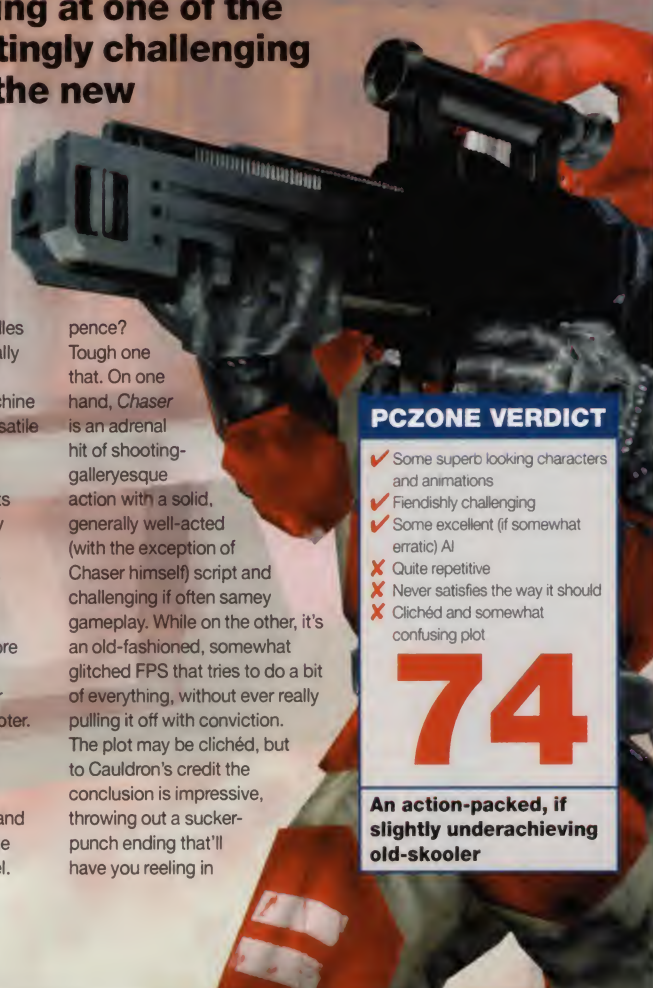
SHIFT INTO SIXTH GEAR



The outside levels are the best looking.

The CloakNT engine certainly scores highly in the visuals department, rendering some stunning-looking characters who move just like you'd expect them to in real life. Yet many of your surroundings lack a similar sense of detail. If Cauldron had gone for broke and unleashed the full power of its engine, there's little doubt it would be close to rivaling *Doom III* in the beauty stakes.

But great-looking character models aren't its only forte. On the odd occasion when you do venture outside to more open and impressive looking landscapes, it's instantly clear that an opportunity has gone begging. Why Cauldron didn't throw in a few sprawling, free-form levels to help chop up the abundance of corridor-based action is anyone's guess, as it really could have propelled an already entertaining game into the Essential bracket.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Some superb looking characters and animations
- ✓ Fiendishly challenging
- ✓ Some excellent (if somewhat erratic) AI
- ✗ Quite repetitive
- ✗ Never satisfies the way it should
- ✗ Clichéd and somewhat confusing plot

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An action-packed, if slightly underachieving old-skooler

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TAKE TWO



Some of the animations are OK, but the characters lack detail.



Explosions of rage can be spectacular.



The senses mode shows what you should be doing.



X-MEN 2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE

■ £29.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Livesay Technologies | ETA: Out Now | www.wolverinesrevenge.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 733, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

Mark Hill tried to avoid swearing on this page. The developers tried to make a good game. Both of them failed

THERE'S only one thing worse than a bad port of a console game, and that's a bad port of a bad console game. *Wolverine's Revenge* adds itself

to the long list of licence desecrations (second only to *Evil Dead*) with the greatest of ease, and is such a blatant rush-job attempt to cash-in on the *X-Men* 2 movie, you feel like suing them.

As someone who devoured Marvel comics as a youngster and prized Wolverine as the greatest, coolest character in any of them, I'm fully equipped on the *X-Men* knowledge front. I don't think I've been this pissed off at a game in all my years as a reviewer.

LOGAN'S RUN

Wolverine is like the comic equivalent of Humphrey Bogart: tough, hacked off with the past and pretending to look after no one but himself. So it comes as a

nice surprise to find the game investigates the hero's origins by setting the first section in 1968, and the escape from the lab where he was experimented on.

Right from the intro movie though, you can see this is a shabby affair. Once you start playing, and are confronted with the abominable controls (don't even bother if you haven't got a joypad with two analogue sticks), you know it for sure. But it's not until you realise the true lack of depth of the gameplay, the frustration of yet another no-saves design and the sheer boredom of the whole enterprise, that your blood really begins to boil.

There are a few good ideas in there, like the use of Wolverine's

animal senses, his healing abilities and proneness to lose his temper. But they're all appallingly implemented. There were moments where the bad design and even worse conversion hang-ups, had me having to control my own temper. Oh, and it's bugged to buggery too. Crashes and clipping problems are common.

USE THE VOICE, LUKE

About the only saving grace is the voice acting, especially Mark Hamill's surprising effectiveness as Wolverine. Who would have thought squeaky Skywalker had it in him?

X Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge is still a complete travesty though. At least Spiderman (another great comic hero) got a polished, if uninspired game. Note to Marvel: please make a comic where Wolverine takes his revenge on the short-sighted marketing departments responsible for rushing this piece of crap out. [F]

"Right from the intro movie, you can see this is a shabby affair"

INPERSPECTIVE

SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE
Reviewed Issue 117, Score 79%

Not amazing, but at least this solid game was slick and well put together. Wall crawling and webslinging across a city are worth the money alone.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2:
SUBSTANCE

Reviewed Issue 127, Score 83%
Wolverine's occasional stabs at stealth and the design of some of the soldiers are obviously influenced by Snake's antics. Get the real deal instead.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ The voice acting
- ✓ The presence of Wolverine in the game
- ✗ Pretty much everything else

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A despicable marketing scam

8 New Units · 9 New Heroes · 26 New Missions

— — — — —
Infinite Strategy



EXPANSION SET
4TH JULY



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The green cross code makes it to war-torn France.



OK, so its *Half-Life* engine is a little dated these days, but *Day Of Defeat* still looks decent enough.

DAY OF DEFEAT

£19.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Valve Software | ETA: Out Now | www.dayofdefeatmod.com

REQUIRES PIII 600MHz, 128Mb RAM, a 16Mb 3D card and a 56k modem or LAN connection

DESIRES PIII 1.2GHz, 512Mb RAM, a 32Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection



ONLINE ONLY

In the case of Paul 'Repetitive Death Syndrome' Presley, never has a game title been more apt



INPERSPECTIVE

COUNTER-STRIKE

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 86%

The definitive team-based mod.

Long past its best now and filled

with cheating scum. We await

Condition Zero with baited breath.

BATTLEFIELD 1942

(Multiplayer Review)

Reviewed Issue 123, Score 91%

Arguably the best WWII online

shooter (although some would say

DoD is better). Bigger in scope and

you get to drive tanks too.

..CONNECTION

accepted by jolt2.

dodserver.co.uk

..Welcome to Day Of Defeat

server v1.0

..Choose Team

>1. Allies

..IR Baboon has joined

TEAM>>Allies

"Go Go Go!"

..IR Baboon has been sniped by

!ÜberHardBASTARD(ClanXXX)

..Connection ended by user

ripping modem out of wall in

display of self-loathing

and inner disgust

"Sigh"

And repeat till fade. Let me just clear something up right from the start here. Because it's been worrying me for a while now, and since we're all friends here, I feel like being scrupulously honest with you: There are a lot of people out there that are better at online

shooters than me. There. I've said it.

However, this sad fact doesn't mean I hate them in any way. In fact, I love them. But *Day Of Defeat* does give me cause to raise a point I feel is pertinent to this whole online team shooting melange. Online shooters can be more than a little tricky for newbies to get into, and this is no exception. With many of its servers populated by groups



One way of getting blood from a rock.



"Oh, meet the gang 'cos the boys are here, the boys to entertain you..."



Dig for victory was once a watchword. But we don't think they quite meant it this way.



Sand bags can provide much needed cover from enemy fire.

CAN YOU TELL WHAT IT IS YET?

OR HOW A FOURTEEN YEAR-OLD WON THE WAR

One of the additions Valve has made to *Day Of Defeat* is a handy little map thing in the corner of the screen. Knowing where you're going always helps in a war situation, as does seeing exactly where your team-mates are being slaughtered, so you can avoid whoever it was who wiped your buddies out.

Extra special is the ability to enlarge the map and paint little symbols and directional markers onto it, letting all you armchair generals tell your clan of c00l dewdz exactly which areas to attack, and defend, or where the enemy has set up his sniper positions and machine gun nests. Assuming anyone out there actually bothers to listen to you, that is.



"So you want us to run around in circles then get shot?"

"Online shooters can be a little tricky for newbies to get into, and this is no exception"

of elite hotshots who will scare the weak-bladdered newcomer away rather quickly.

Day Of Defeat is a superb *Half-Life* mod, occasionally let down only by the hardcore nature of its players. Gameplay is more or less identical in nature to *Battlefield 1942*'s WWII-themed territory capturing, just lacking the vehicles, map sizes and EA branding of developer DICE's slightly superior gaming

experience. Instead, *DoD* adheres slightly closer to every other *Half-Life* multiplayer mod's 'rush and crush' mindset. Each of the maps generally boils down to several key areas that house the core of the game's fighting.

CLASS WAR

With the right team-mates surrounding you, the potential for thrilling gun action is there for all to see. There are several

classes for you to play as, each offering new options and requiring a completely different style of play. So while heavy machine gunners provide covering fire from sandbagged safety, cannon fodder – sorry, infantrymen – can storm the flag area ahead, while support classes chuck ammo pouches about the place like the expert tossers they are.

Unlike something as grand in scope as, say, *Operation*



A good vantage point definitely improves your chances.



His gun's melted into the wall. Poor chap.



Not the best camo in the world, but it reduces friendly fire.



The 5th Armoured Flag Carrying Division score another victory.

Flashpoint, where you feel like you are part of a much wider war, this is small-scale skirmish territory, plain and simple. You'll come to know the few square feet in the centre of the *Avalanche* map's ruined townscape like you do the back of your hand. Which means winning soon boils down to a combination of tactics, pattern repetition and fastest finger/most accurate shot first.

WAR CHANGES LITTLE

Fun though. In that diversionary, office lunch-hour, sort of way. Those that have been destroying the moral fabric

Plus there's an in-game map you can put indicators on (see boxout, previous page), which adds a whole new dimension to the tactical possibilities, making teamwork far more regular than in most other online shooters.

THE GUNS OF NEVER ON

This retail version also offers other features which the V1 download (available from the official website) doesn't. There's a new interface system which allows smoother server browsing and some easier customising, and there are new models too. It's also a stand-alone product, meaning you

"We plucky Brits are in there, complete with comedy accents and moustaches"

of polite society with the downloadable pre-retail versions will want to know what's changed now that there's a big old Activision logo and price sticker on the box.

New maps. Nine of them, some with new objectives and sub-objectives, such as blowing up tanks, liberating important war documents and holding onto a stronghold. Other existing levels have been given a full *Changing Rooms* makeover, with tucks and tweaks here and there, plus a new lick of upgraded texture paint. Oh, and we plucky Brits have been chucked into the mix, replete with comedy 'Allo 'Allo accents and moustaches.

won't need a copy of *Half-Life* to play, as you do with the downloaded version.

But do I REALLY like this game? Well to put it simply, yes. I can't say *DoD* grabbed me as much as *BF1942* did when I first encountered it, and I still prefer its larger-scale effort. But it makes a hell of a nice change from *Counter-Strike*, and it's a much more tactical experience.

It's fun, it's fast and it has the potential to be the next online shooter of choice among discerning housewives the world over. But whether you're prepared to pay twenty quid to play it when you can pretty much download it free of charge is up to you. **PC2**

MISSED OPPORTUNITY



"Do what I tell you or I'll blow your damn head off!"

WHO'S IN COMMAND HERE?

We've said it before and we'll say it again, but some kind of command structure would massively increase the strategic possibilities in online shooters. A Captain, Sergeant, Corporal, Private hierarchy with penalties for not following orders would have made teamwork a must here. And if you could have the option to either switch this feature on or off, people could have the choice of what kind of server to run or join. No-one has done this yet. Maybe one day, someone will, and, in the process, shut us up.



SECOND OPINION

MARTIN KORDA

"We can't hold them much longer, they're streaming over the bridge. Need reinforcements now. Where the hell are my reinforcements? Damn it, where the hell are you guys, there's too many of..." It's exclamations such as these, made possible by some excellent voice communication options, which help make *Day Of Defeat* one of the most atmospheric, tense and enjoyable online shooters I've ever played. And you'll be seeing plenty of manic moments like these online, rest assured. However, considering it's up there on the Net for free, this retail version is only worth buying if you don't want to mess around with downloads or don't own *Half-Life*.

Teamwork is essential for success (much more so than in *Counter-Strike*), as the capturing of strongholds often requires support fire and multiple team-mates, rather than one hot-shot lone ranger.

The engine, despite its enhancements and particle effects, is looking pretty dated. But those of you still chugging away on lower-end machines and 56K modems will be thankful for this fact. The maps are generally superbly crafted and well balanced (although there are one or two duffers in there too), and all in all, there's not much else out there which will give you more hours of online shooting enjoyment than this, especially if you hit a server populated with a decent crowd.

So don't delay, there's a war to be won soldier!

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Good, class-based gameplay
- ✓ Tight, well designed maps highlight the skirmish play
- ✓ Filled with essential one-more-go-ness
- ✓ Some tactical possibilities
- ✗ Maps too small for full-scale tactical gameplay
- ✗ Dated *Half-Life* engine

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Top mod action, but still just a mod

'How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?' *Fight Club*, 1999, Twentieth Century Fox)

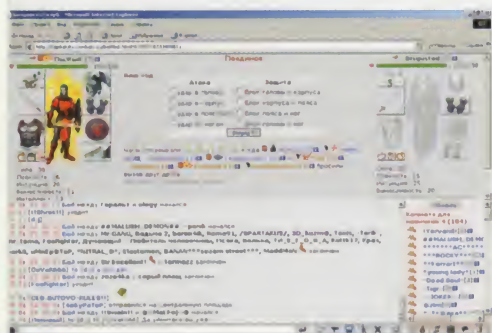
Four years have passed since Brad Pitt and Edward Norton were fighting it out on the streets of America in David Fincher's cult film. *Fight Club* was the place where young men with good white-collar jobs fought each other bare-fisted in an attempt to regain that little something missing from their comfortable - but ultimately dull - lives.



City of Angels view

Today we find ourselves once again on the brink of a new revolution, this time courtesy of a hacker-turned-game-developer from Moscow. Just like the club in the film, www.combats.ru began as a creator's vision; a vision which spread like wildfire through the Russian on-line RPG underground and set virtual hearts ablaze. Who would have imagined that just one year on, a website that was initially created for a group of friends would attract over a million hits a day from people in Russia and abroad. This virtual *Fight Club* has grown to become the most popular on-line entertainment project in Russia, receiving an award for 'Best Russian On-line Game'. Tyler Durden would be proud.

Perpetually renewed by its Creator, a being of infinite power; bombarded by the Dustman, a rebellious and destructive angel: the world of *Fight Club* is shaped by the conflict between these two great forces.



Battle Screen

Through this battle between good and evil each of us will find an answer to the question that's been eating us away from the inside: the question of who we really are.

Starting the game as an ordinary guy (or girl), fist-fighting other newbies, the game progresses as

you strive towards power and dominance in the ever-evolving world. The possibilities are endless. You choose your allegiance: Be good; or be evil; or stay away from the eternal struggle between the two by embracing and attempting to uphold your belief in neutrality. Travel between different towns each with its own unique atmosphere.

Employ powerful spells or unleash your strength of arms to battle your friends and foes alike. You can even become a reporter for a local newspaper or fall in love with a Fair Lady and attempt to win her heart. Can you be the one to divine the sound of church bells above the fighting? Or if you're weary of brawling, make your fortune by trading, plying a craft, or by gambling. You can socialize with your friends and antagonize your foes at any time - even during the fights - thanks to the convenient and flexible chat-system integrated into the game. Whatever your desire, there will be something for everyone in this game.



Actual combat is turn-based and simple to learn. The characters' bodies are divided into four zones - head, torso, lower body and legs. At every turn each player attacks the zone which they think is not defended, and at the same time try to anticipate the opponent's move and block two of the zones. So much like a sophisticated version of the good old 'rock, paper and scissors' game. However, there is more to it than meets the eye. Strategies differ with every opponent and you have to be unpredictable if you want to win. Success comes only from mastery and skill.

There are different types of combat - fist-fight, armed and magical - as well as group combat. With every victory your character gains more experience, which allows you to improve your abilities, 'leveling up' just like in any RPG game. As they advance, players are able to use weapons and armor as well and other items and magical spells. These can be bought and sold at the trade rooms or in the city shops.

Combat is an important aspect of the game but by no means the only one. Role-playing is another part of it. You can become a noble paladin enforcing Law and Order, protecting honest citizens from thieves and other wrong-doers, or pledge your allegiance to the powers of darkness and become a blood-thirsty vampire hunting the streets in search of prey. Clans play their intricate political games and develop their own unique powers, forge alliances and declare wars.



Grave Yard view

The popularity of the game in Russia has been nothing short of phenomenal. It appeals to all ages and both sexes alike. Here you can find a twelve year old kid beating a grown man senseless. And nothing feels as good as victory. The game provides an exciting mix of fighting and role-playing and its outward simplicity masks the depth of the emotional experience on offer. Better still, there is no subscription charge and anyone with Internet Explorer should be able to play.

At the moment the game is available in Russian language only. The good news is that the creators are working hard on translating the game into English language with the provisional launch date of the new version slotted for August 2003. Even better news is that the new version will be further enhanced, providing richer environments and gameplay. The address for the English version is www.combatsworld.com. We can't wait to give you all a slap!

For further information please contact combats@combatsworld.com





BLOODRAYNE

■ £24.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Terminal Reality | ETA: May 2 | www.bloodrayne.com

REQUIRES PIII 733, 128Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card DESIRES P4 2GHz and 512Mb RAM

She's got the curves, she's got the moves, but *Mark Hill* prefers his women with more brains

THERE'S nothing like a game to open up your mind to a whole new world of ideas and groundbreaking concepts. What if vampires existed and a half-human hybrid decided to use its powers to combat evil? What if the Nazis had dabbled in the occult, raising zombies and so on? What if Atlantis was yadda yadda yadda? You get the idea. *BloodRayne* hasn't got an

original fang in its sharp set of dentures. You've got a main character who's a bit of Blade, Buffy, 2000 AD's Durham Red and Bloody Mallory (from a cult French action/horror movie). You've got a ridiculous plot that bastardises *Wolfenstein*, *Indiana Jones* and one of Terminal Reality's previous games, *Nocturne*. You've got some spectacular slo-mo action straight out of *The Matrix* and *Max Payne*. And yet, it could have been brilliant if it had all been put together right.

start off in a foggy Louisiana swamp, fighting some unconvincing zombies with guns and some generic spidery monsters. And it goes on forever. To make things worse, coming into contact with water depletes your health and, because you can jump vast distances, it's almost impossible to judge jumps to avoid it. Then there's the matter of not being able to save except in between mini-sections which, considering the hard bosses you have to encounter, is nigh on criminal. If I wasn't a professional I would have given up. Once you're

ONCE BITTEN

Since *BloodRayne* is also being released on all the major consoles, it comes as no surprise that it's a very simplistic, non-stop action beat 'em up/shooter, which would be completely unremarkable were it not for your vampiric powers. What does come as a surprise is that the whole first section of the game is so awful and frustrating there's a good chance most of you won't get to the good bits. Well, the better bits at least. You

INPERSPECTIVE

SOUL REAVER 2

Reviewed Issue 111, Score 86%
If you'd rather suck souls than blood and have a few decent puzzles to break up the action, then the Reaver is your man. Very flat chest though.

MAX PAYNE

Reviewed Issue 107, Score 90%
Clearly a big influence on *BloodRayne* with the bullet time and machine gunnery. At least here you get to aim where you want though.



There was already a half-vampire girl in *Nocturne*.



You would have thought a vampire would move in shadows, but there's zero stealth here.



There are only three major scenarios.

through it though, the action jumps five years later to 1938 (yes, that's right, the whole ordeal didn't even have anything to do with the story) and things improve.

control though, since aiming is automatic and the rest is pure button bashing. At least, unlike many of the recent multiplatform titles, the controls are spot on for the most part. Facing the right way can be a problem though, and the result is Rayne running backwards and sideways like an out-of-control vibrator.

THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY

A bigger problem is just how repetitive it all is. With no puzzles, no stealth and little variety to the surroundings, it

The swamps give way to a Nazi complex in Argentina, where you have to hunt down and kill a series of high-ranking officers and uncover the obligatory secret experiments. The lack of water is the first improvement, so you can concentrate on dispatching soldiers in the most gruesome ways imaginable, as well as topping up on health by having a good gnaw on their jugular.

SEEING RED

There's nothing better than sucking blood, especially when it's done as stylishly as this. It's action all the way, as you spin and hack with the blades on your arms or use the array of machine guns available. When you reach a certain point you can activate your Blood Rage, which turns the screen red and you into a feral killing machine. You also unlock new movements as you progress as well as new modes of vision. There's one that acts as a sort of night vision (and points the way helpfully to your next objective), the bullet-time mode (not sure how that's a vision type) and, later, a sniper zoom view.

This is where *BloodRayne* shines, when you slow down time, start dodging the bullets carving through the air and throwing scissor kicks that send enemy limbs flying. It looks amazing. You never feel in

gets tiresome fairly quickly. Corridor, corridor, load of zombies, corridor, boss. Repeat ad nauseam.

The acting too is lifeless (except for the guy who voiced the main character in *Nocturne*, who has a great James Earl Jones croak) with dialogue to match. Somehow when a zombie Nazi growls: "I'll wear you like lederhosen", you just know it wasn't meant to be funny.

There is a certain B-movie charm to it all, though. Kind of a '70s Italian sexploitation with zombies, S&M gear, over the top gore and Nazis, that remind one of sleazy video nasties like *Ilsa, She Wolf Of The SS* (who pretty much makes an appearance as The Butcheress here) and *SS Experiment Camp*.

It's fun in small doses, but we recommend you give the demo a spin before buying to see if this consoley action/adventure is really for you or not. **F**

BABIES' DINNERS

A WORLD WHERE VAMPIRES EXIST, BUT BRAS DON'T



Go for the jug-ular.

Nocturne had incredible innovations in lighting and cloth movement, but *BloodRayne* brings you the jigglest breasts you've ever seen. Balls of jelly with a life of their own, they ripple at the tiniest movement. Sometimes just someone talking will set them off. The only time these cut-scenes have been matched was when



OK, it's leather, but that outfit is just stupid.

Sabrina trolloped all over the Top Of The Pops stage with *Boys, Boys, Boys*. The winner has to be the mad, blonde Nazi bombshell in a nurse's uniform though. Pure class. She even has kung-fu movements of her own. And I bet you didn't know all female vampires shopped at Anne Summers either.



Is it just me or is she not really that attractive?

"There is a certain B-movie charm to it. Kind of a '70s Italian sexploitation with zombies"

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Bloodsucking
- ✓ Great *Matrix*-style moves
- ✓ Gory B-movie quality
- ✗ Repetitive
- ✗ Nonsense story
- ✗ Fairly one dimensional

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Solid yet repetitive action bloodsucker





All the ships without exception can be flown by anyone, of any race, so long as they have the required skill and the money to buy them.

EVE ONLINE: THE SECOND GENESIS



■ £34.99 (plus subscription – from US\$10.95 per month, first month 'free') | Pub: Crucial Entertainment | Dev: CCP | ETA: Out Now | www.eve-online.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and a 56K modem

DESIRES PIII 1GHz processor, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card and an ADSL Internet connection

Richie Shoemaker may have found his perfect game. Played entirely online, it's one that can be enjoyed whether you are in front of your PC or asleep in bed. Now that's genius

IMPERSPECTIVE

FREELANCER

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 84%

We waited five years for this and though the single-player game is engaging and fun, the massively multiplayer component never materialised. Despite the arcade leanings and simplistic economy, it remains a great if short-lived game.

EARTH AND BEYOND

Reviewed Issue 126, Score 75%

Westwood's sci-fi swansong is the game *Eve* will always be compared to, most obviously because of the third-person view and the online deep space setting. Although you can trade and fight in much the same way, underneath the visuals there is very little to *E&B* that warrants a lengthy subscription.

I DON'T think I've ever been this way before, so infatuated by a single game. Obsessive about games in general, yes, but not one solitary game. I've lain awake thinking about how I might best subjugate the medieval population of Denmark after a lengthy *Total War* session, tossed and turned in subconscious moral turmoil after running over old dears in some *GTA*-fuelled dream world, but never before has a game so consumed my days and nights as much when I'm away from it as when I'm in the same room.

It isn't simply the deep space setting that has so enraptured me. Nor is it the obvious *Elite*-

inspired freedom to explore thousands of vast solar systems, trade hundreds of goods between them, alongside a population of online gamers that are, for the first time, truly global. The simple fact is that after trying my hand at virtually every massively multiplayer online game released over the last five years, *Eve* is the first to really grab my attention (and my wallet) and hold it for longer than a couple of weeks.

SKILLED INACTION

Though on the surface it portrays itself as an epic online space adventure, at its heart *Eve* is very much a traditional role-playing game, in that the grand

aim is to first create and then advance your character. However, rather than focus on boosting your fleet of ships, it is the pilot that you must centre your attentions on, and without arbitrary levels of experience to chase, the means to progress is provided by the altogether more logical method of hoarding and spending vast amounts of cash, either through selling-on mined raw materials and player-made finished goods, or by whoring out your services as a courier/gun for hire.

Although there are stats to pore over and a bewildering array of skills to learn, what really makes *Eve* so simple to grasp – in terms of the concept rather



Money will buy back a blackened reputation, or for the ultimate status symbol, your very own space station, which has gotta be better than a mud hut and a +2 Staff of Darkness.



Not only is *Eve* an incredible game, it looks stunning too.

than the actual game – is that instead of boring your way through an asteroid field in order to ‘level up’ your Mining skill, you simply need to click on the option to train that skill. This could take anything from 15 minutes to a number of days, depending of course on the level of the skill in question. Since you don’t even have to be online to train, you can go to bed, log in the next day and discover you are able to jam the propulsion systems of potential enemies a little more effectively than before.

Although your characters are the hub for the basic role-playing mechanics of the game, on screen it is the ships that take centre stage. Ranging from remote-controlled drones to immense Titans and space stations, the variety in size and style between the four playable

species is quite staggering. The half-built ragtag look of the tribal Minmatar ships are at striking odds with the sleek curves of the Imperial Amarran race, both old and bitter enemies. The arty-farty liberals of the Gallente Republic seem to favour a design that is almost aquatic, while the cold calculating Caldari ships look angular and functional, just like their ultra capitalist owners.

CORPUS MENTUS

Although CCP has attempted to ease players in by creating a couple of functional (if somewhat laboured) tutorials to explain the concept of mining, picking up missions and navigating through the various station screens can be bewildering or even totally off-putting if you don’t seek help from other players. If you wish

to trade, you must first find routes that are safe and profitable, which is easier said than done. To research or manufacture your own goods, you first need raw materials, and if you simply want to shoot off into the unknown and join or prey on pirates, you really need to think about acquiring heavier weaponry than what you’re first issued with. But, if no one is building or importing the weapons you need, how are you to find them?

Thankfully you begin the game far from alone. Depending on your choice of race and schooling, you begin as a member of one of the game’s many NPC corporations, staffed by other newcomers and a few veterans who haven’t been bothered to move on. Though not as prominent as player-run



Days, even weeks of play, can suddenly be lost at the whim of a malevolent player who happens to be passing by.

“One of the big draws of *Eve Online* is that sooner or later players can set up their own corporations”

companies, the NPC corps oversee one of the most important roles in the game: providing through a well-populated chat channel, a vast resource of hints, tips and news. Without it, player turnover would be worryingly high I’d wager.

One of the big draws of *Eve* is that sooner or later players can

set up their own corporations. Much like your typical guilds, Corps allow players to join forces, with the benefit of having a hierarchical structure of command running the show. Players who prefer to play solo can and do get by very well indeed, but it is the corporations that are the real power brokers.

THE FACE RACE

PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD...



For those of you who wondered what Richie really looks like.

Though the game is played entirely from the captain’s chair, the development team behind *Eve* has attempted to lend the game a human face by allowing players to mould their character’s appearance before setting sail. Despite the fact that you only see other player’s faces as passport photo-sized stills, the detail you can lavish on your avatar is quite staggering. Almost a game in itself, you can choose from a number of hairstyles, eye colours, facial furniture, even tinker with the underlying bone structure. Then, when you think you’ve got the right features, you can alter your pose and dim the lights to set the mood you want to give when you start meeting other players.

A WHOLE LOTTA NOTHING

THE LONELY PLANET GUIDE TO EVE



Eve has more than 5,000 systems to explore.

Eve is home to around 5,000 systems, each one composed of a central sun (or two), a few planets, their moons, asteroid fields and usually one or more stations, not to mention the jumpgates that link all the systems together – all of which is, technically speaking, a lot of stuff. Unsurprisingly, the space surrounding all these stellar objects is rather vast, and even though using its regular engines a typical ship can travel well over 200 metres per second, the distance between a planet and its moon is usually many millions of kilometres. But get this; the distance between two jumpgates in a single system can extend to more than 100AUs (1AU equalling 149,597,871km). Crikey, thank goodness for warp drives.

Setting up a company is a relatively easy and cheap task (with the right skills, of course), however, making a company work and flourish is almost a game in itself. Each corp starts out by renting out offices at a space station, from which aspects like recruitment have to be decided. Other players can apply for positions like trading officer, tactical officer, accountant and even personnel manager. The CEO can even set tax rates on member earnings, issue shares, set docking or rental fees for other individuals or companies (if you own a station), and even pass a vote on whether

to declare war on the rival corporations.

Despite such a wide variety of money-making opportunities and the deep social structure running through the game, what many will be wanting to do, either alone or with a bunch of mates, is blow apart other ships.

Your playing view is more akin to Homeworld than Freelancer.

As with the recent *Freelancer*, Eve ditches the need for a joystick in favour of mouse control, although rather than pilot the game via a pseudo first-person view, the interface is very much closer to real-time strategy games like *Homeworld*, with the camera at all times centred on your ship.

COLD SPACE

Like every other aspect of the game, combat is as much down to your 'installed' skills as a pilot

as the ship you control, making combat in Eve a more strategic event than in other space combat games, with each item of equipment requiring a certain amount of power to operate. Lasers, shield boosters, sensors, counter-measures and afterburners can inflict as much a drain on resources as the enemy.

The most costly of all is losing your ship in battle. Penalties in Eve are far harsher than in other online games; come off the worst in a deep space joust and you lose not only your ship, but its installed equipment and the contents of your cargo bay. A cost in game terms that could take anything from a few hours to a number of days to rebuild. For purists, the style of combat and the harsh penalties of dying will be too much to take.

EARLY DAYS

Whether or not such design decisions are right or wrong remain to be seen. For every person that will view Eve as a frustrating grief-ridden game, there will be one – myself included – who sees it as a refreshing change from the safer, anodyne worlds current online games offer. That said, it is still early in Eve's hopefully long life and no doubt many things will change over the coming months.

Yes, there are bugs and inconsistencies, typing errors and loopholes to exploit, but through the teething

troubles and despite the incredibly steep learning curve, the vast distances you often have to travel and an interface that could do with an overhaul, the sheer breadth and scope of the game, its beauty and complexity, will surely win the hearts of many jaded gamers (and die-hard *Elite* fans).

However, the vast Eve universe – more than any other newly launched massively multiplayer game before it – offers a fiction of completely overwhelming and almost limitless possibilities. From the interface to the asymmetrical designs of the many and varied spacecraft, and the intense light and shadow of space, Eve simply oozes style from every single pixel. Not only is it the best game I've played all year, it's one of the most engrossing massively multiplayer games I've experienced full stop, one that could and should develop into one of the most important sci-fi games of all time. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Unparalleled scope to interact, explore and trade
- ✓ Stylish and detailed graphics
- ✓ Powerful guild structure
- ✓ Absolutely vast game world
- ✗ Steep learning curve
- ✗ Harsh penalties for dying

88

Forget Freelancer, Eve is the new Elite

Although you can buy and own as many ships as your wallet will allow, you can only pilot one at a time.



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Enjoy your safety in newbieville. It won't last long.

SHADOWBANE

■ £TBA (\$34.99 from US) | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Wolfpack Studios |
ETA: TBA (available from US) | www.chronicle.ubi.com

REQUIRES PIII 700, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and a 56K modem
DESIRES 256Mb RAM and an ADSL connection

Graphics vs gameplay, it's that old chestnut again. Chris Anderson reviews a game whose very existence depends on the outcome

ONLINE ONLY

THE *Shadowbane* beta test was a very strange affair indeed. The graphics were so bad people were laughing openly, yet there was a group of people who insisted that *Shadowbane* would be released with a brand new graphics engine when it went live, and all would be well.

As if. It was never going to happen, and it has not happened, though the game is looking a lot better than it did in beta. Nevertheless, compared to *Asheron's Call 2* or *Anarchy Online*, it sits firmly at the bottom of the looks tree.

So, any graphics whores out there can look away now. The

rest of you, stick around, we're here to tell you all about the gameplay. In a nutshell, *Shadowbane* is yet another fantasy-based online RPG. Kill monsters, find and loot gold, level up, get new spells and skills. You know the score.

WHO DARES WINS

However, *Shadowbane* stands out from its competitors in one very significant way. The entire game is based around player versus player combat (PvP). You can level up to level 20 in a safe environment and hone your skills (maximum level is 70) without risk of attack from vastly superior players. But from then on you're packed off into the big bad world, and are fair game for higher levels to pick off and rob blind.

Harsh? Well yes, and no. It lends the game an element of real risk that you won't have experienced in similar games. You will feel genuinely scared when attacked by player killers or enemy guilds because you can, and will, lose everything.

This kind of environment is not everyone's cup of tea, but if

you want real thrills and spills, PvP is the only way to go.

FIGHTING TALK

So where are the trade skills and quests, both considered essential for a successful online RPG? They're not there, that's where. Outside of guild warfare there is nothing to do. And this in itself will cause many players to burn out long before they get into the full-scale warfare, even though the levelling-up process itself is relatively quick.



The tree of life. You'll be seeing this a lot when you get killed over and over again.



Nice spell effects offset the otherwise disappointing visuals.

"Kill, find and loot gold, level up, get new spells and skills. You know the score"



On the plus side, there is a huge variety of classes, races, professions and disciplines to choose from and *Shadowbane* offers more variety in terms of character customisation than any of its competitors. But ultimately the appeal (or lack thereof) of PvP combat will determine whether or not the game is a success.

Shadowbane has yet to receive a UK release date, so for now you'll have to track down an imported US copy, but look out for updates as it develops. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

ULTIMA ONLINE

Reviewed Issue 80, Score 92%
If you want PvP but also a lot more depth of gameplay, this is your game.

ASHERON'S CALL 2

Reviewed Issue 126, Score 70%
If you want graphical eye candy, here it is, in spades. But it's nowhere near as good as...

EVERQUEST: NEW DAWN

Reviewed Issue 125, Score 87%
Simply the best if PvP is of no concern.



Killing. This is what *Shadowbane* is all about.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Great implementation of PvP
- ✓ Varied and impressive skill trees
- ✓ Very easy to pick up and play
- ✗ Graphics of yesteryear
- ✗ Combat-only environment has limited appeal
- ✗ No NPC quests or trade skills

70

Exciting combat environment, but not much else



Even the might of the German army cannot stand in the way of a force like that.



Planes drop Paras. What do Paras make? A complete mess.



Take out searchlights and you might get some reinforcements.

WORLD WAR II: FRONTLINE COMMAND

£24.99 | Pub: Koch Media | Dev: The Bitmap Brothers |
ETA: May 2 | www.kochmedia.co.uk

REQUIRES: PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card
DESIRES: P4 1.5GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

Take cover! Another RTS is about to bomb, Keith Pullin is right under it

THE BITMAP Brothers, developers of *World War II: Frontline Command*, could possibly claim to be among the greatest game creators of all time. Illustrious achievements such as *Speedball 2*, *Gods* and *Xenon 2* left gamers of yesteryear in spasms of awe.

Recent success has been harder to achieve. The Bitmaps

no longer possess the breathtaking originality of yore. The problem is – we've seen it all before. RTSs rain down on us like mortar fire from a cliff-top cannon – and most of them are equally as unpleasant. *WWII: FC* is by no means the worst, but it's extremely bloody average.

STRESSED OUT

In an attempt to simulate the extreme stress and hardship of WWII, this 37 mission RTS claims to possess a morale system that directly affects the

system plainly doesn't work. There's simply no noticeable difference in reaction speed or weapon accuracy regardless of whether your boys are stuck in the middle of a field surrounded by Nazis, or safely entrenched in an Allied bunker.

It'd also be nice to have an interface that worked. Grouped units tend to split up as soon as they start walking (or crawling), making advancing through enemy territory infuriating.

Equally mystifying is the supposed dynamic engine

"The sound features anguished cries of the dying and bullets fizzing and ricocheting around you"

way your troops react. In theory it's a hint of the innovative AI the company was once so renowned for. In practice the

incorporating 3D line of sight and hearing. As far as we can tell this is no different from any other RTS. If anything, your soldiers'

ability to spot the enemy before they spot you is probably worse than most – it's certainly not a patch on the eagle-eyed, quick-witted survival instincts of the units in *C&C: Generals*.

LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH

Even visually the game is disappointing; landscapes are bleak and lacking detail, the 3D camera reveals little of the terrain around you and units are small and poorly animated. The only redeeming feature atmospherically is the sound, which features anguished cries of the dying and bullets fizzing and ricocheting around you.

Though it pains us to say it, the reality is that this is an enormously uninspiring RTS. There is the occasional moment of joy, most notably the D-Day beach mission, but again, we've been there before.

For a much more wholesome WWII experience, *Blitzkrieg*,

Commandos 2 and *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* are all infinitely more entertaining prospects. And when it comes to all-out modern warfare you cannot beat *C&C: Generals*.

We just hope that whatever problems befell the development of this game they do not herald the end of The Bitmap Brothers. It really would be a terrible way to go. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ 37 missions
- ✓ Missions based on actual events
- ✗ Poor pathfinding and AI
- ✗ Dismal interface
- ✗ Bleak graphics
- ✗ What morale system?

45

Mortally wounded

BREATH OF FIRE IV

■ £12.99 | Pub: Capcom | Dev: Capcom | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 233, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

DESIRES PII 350 and a decent joypad (no mouse support)

James Lyon almost has a Grandia day out with this console-conversion adventure game

LESS well-known than *Final Fantasy*, *Breath Of Fire IV* debuted on the PSone. Unlike the glorious spectacles of the *FF*

games, *BOF IV* is a bottle-bottomed pair stuck together with tape; it's showing its age, flaunting its wares with some outmoded isometric visuals. The characters are very pixelated and look like outcasts from an early Sierra adventure. Unlike the abominable *Dino Crisis 2* (see below) though, the cute style of the visuals helps subdue the worst of it to produce something tolerably likeable. The plot revolves around a tale of dragons, gods and princesses that pushes you straight forward from one cutscene to the next.

The battles are of the irritatingly random kind, though thankfully they're not constantly intrusive. The turn-based combat system does the job adequately, turning in an interesting feature in which

characters' spells can be cast together to produce various combo attacks. But it's just too easy to win. This is OK though since the story spans numerous hours and tries to add variety with an abundance of mini-games peppering the plot's progress. The good-natured simplicity and unchallenging nature also make you want to push on just to see where it takes you next. Basically, it's the gaming equivalent of a giant tub of sweet buttered popcorn. It's simple and less than nutritious, yet at the same time enjoyable and more-ish until you finish it and forget all about it.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

67

An entertaining yet inoffensively simplistic colourful RPG epic



Looks like a *Junior Senior* video at times.



Nice hat.



Battles are simplistic with a smattering of strategy.



"It's going to take more than a pistol, love."

"The B-movie plot gets suitably silly and awful towards the end"

DINO CRISIS 2

■ £12.99 | Pub: Capcom | Dev: Capcom | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 233, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

DESIRES PII 350 and a decent joypad

James Lyon goes walking with a dinosaur of a game

IT'S NICE to see that, while the GameCube's just been furnished with a souped-up version of *Resident Evil*, us PC owners get lumped with a no-

frills conversion of this old PSone offshoot sequel. And graphically, it stinks. Foregoing the original's pseudo-3D backgrounds, it regresses back to painted inanimate surfaces. Designed for low-res TV screens, on modern monitors it looks risibly awful, as if someone's smeared Vaseline on the screen, and as turning up the resolution only results in key objects and characters sharpening, it often looks like they're not even part of the same game.

In gameplay terms, it's not the best example of the survival horror genre, the emphasis placed on shooting rather than traditional puzzling and ammo conservation. So you backtrack through long sections, firing at respawning dinosaurs, trading in your score for more ammo and health. Except the outdated control mode stops it being very

intuitive. Attempts have been made to fix problems with better quick-turn and instant aim options, but laborious controls and bad camera angles let it down.

The B-movie plot gets suitably silly and awful towards the end, and the game tries to add a few different shooting sub-games but there isn't enough to save it from feeling average and anachronistic. A poor and tardy console conversion indeed.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

34

Abysmally prehistoric graphics mar an already below average game



Dinosaurs respawn after each camera switch.





MISTMARE

■ £24.99 | Pub: Mindscape | Dev: Sinister Systems | ETA: May 9

REQUIRES PIII 800, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card
DESIRES A PIII 1.2 GHz should do it

Keith Pullin wafts along with the fog in this alternate-world action/adventure

SET IN 1996 in an alternative Europe where the Vatican is all-powerful and monks patrol the streets with an iron fist, *Mistmare* is a curious action/adventure with a hint of RPG (Religious Paranoia Gaming). The religious overtones seep into every part of the game, with spells all drawn from your ability to tap into your affinity with solar, lunar or terran energies. In other words, the more you pray, the more powerful you become.

As the plot unfolds, the intriguing political power-struggle within the Vatican boils over. Bishops accuse bishops of undermining the church; the Pope's position is under threat, and a deadly monster-infested fog is slowly engulfing Europe.

Thankfully, you can temporarily escape the corrupt cardinals by losing yourself in a glorious sojourn of *Morrowind*-esque non-linear exploration. Dotted around several towns are sub-quests offering tasks such as finding a dirty statue of the

Virgin Mary (dirty as in dusty) and rescuing greengrocers from the mafia. These benevolent acts also allow you to increase your skills and attributes in a less intense environment.

All this may sound pretty good, and to be fair *Mistmare* is better than average. But be warned, the AI-controlled fight interface and point and click movement interface are absolute stinkers. It's a massive shame, because with Monolith's *Littech* 3.2 engine under the bonnet, a simple control interface would have sufficed.

The main thing is, *Mistmare* is not a nightmare. In fact, it's quite an atmospheric and enjoyable mixture of gaming styles. True, you'll need plenty of patience before you start to appreciate it, but when you do you'll be more than happy.

PCZONE VERDICT **67**
Not a complete nightmare



Venture too far into the fog and you find this hideous chap.



Some of the fights can take forever to resolve.

RESTAURANT EMPIRE



You play as Armand, inheritor of your uncle's local eaterie.



Your goal is to create a flourishing culinary empire.

■ £24.99 | Pub: Phantagram Interactive | Dev: Enlight Software | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card
DESIRES PIII 800, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan would have preferred kebab kingdom, but never mind

THE LAST time you found yourself screaming "Eat it! Eat it!" at your monitor was probably as you were pumping lead into a pack of Nazis in *Battlefield 1942*. But the next time your vitriolic exhortations could well be meant for the food critic from the local paper who's turning his nose up at your latest culinary creation in *Restaurant Empire*.

The latest tycoon/management game from Trevor "Capitalism" Chan, *Restaurant Empire* starts you off as an up-and-coming restaurateur with the task of first making your small joint a success, and then turning it

into a fully-fledged chain of eateries.

Where *Capitalism* was all spreadsheets and flow charts, this culinary empire builder takes its lead from games such as *The Sims* and presents its wares in 3D. But don't be fooled. For one, *RE* is dry as a bone, lacking the kooky humour and emphasis on light entertainment of *The Sims*. And what's more, underneath the tempting veneer is the daunting level of detail you'd expect from Mr Chan.

Choose your décor, hire chefs, design menus, arrange your suppliers and the quality of ingredients, decide on pay scales for the waiting staff – for

fans of the genre, getting to grips with it all will be a mouthwatering prospect. But for others, it'll be about as appetising as piss cake.

Our main gripe is despite the nice-looking visuals, the game's mechanics can only be really accessed through a bunch of stat screens and information menus.

Meaning you soon lose interest in the 3D view, as the real number-crunching action is taking place behind the scenes. And not even the odd celebrity visit, master chef competition, or random event in the campaign mode will divert you from your profit and loss accounts for long.

It's good at what it does, only it's not really to our tastes.

PCZONE VERDICT **61**
Nice trimmings, but not easily digestible



REPLAY

The place to go when you've got no dough

WARRIOR KINGS GOLD

■ £9.99 | Pub: Empire Interactive | ETA: June

IF ONLY more 3D RTS games had the vision of *Warrior Kings*, the genre might not be stuck in such a turgid rut at the moment. Set in the mythical world of Orbis, you take the role of Artos, heir to the throne of Cravant, who is forced into exile when his father (the king) is slain by a power-hungry bishop. Intent on revenge, you embark on a series of thrilling and diverse missions, set over beautifully rendered, fully 3D levels. With a branching storyline (based on both your moral and strategic decisions) and tech tree (there are five routes you can follow), *Warrior Kings* offers the kind of diversity, depth and beauty that few other games have managed to capture. The gargantuan battles over the fully tactical terrain pit hundreds of troops in epic

battles, while building up towns and gathering resources has rarely been so much fun. And now it's available for a mere ten quid. Bargain.

However, be prepared to put up with some annoying bugs and AI glitches (although this version is far more stable than on original release), and sadly there's no skirmish mode. You want the recently released *Warrior Kings: Battles* for that. What's more, the challenging gameplay could scare off the more lightweight RTS newcomer. However, if you can ignore these problems, you'll find this to be one of the best and most innovative RTS games of all time.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

87



Lay siege to enemy strongholds until they crack like a nut.



Formation and tactical terrain mean there's plenty of strategic diversity.



So simple and yet so addictive: *Red Alert* was a classic in its time.

C&C: RED ALERT

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

OLD AND creaky it may be but *Red Alert* remains a true strategy classic, more so than Westwood's original *C&C*, despite the fact that underneath the alt-Cold War storyline there wasn't much fundamentally different between the two.

But what a storyline it was, eh readers? Al Einstein goes back in time to assassinate a young Adolf Hitler and save the world from World War II, only to leave a power vacuum that would give Joe Stalin free reign to draw the Iron Curtain across the North Sea and start an altogether different war, with you, as was the Westwood way, able to lead to victory either the Reds or the Allies.

Although remembered for its ground-breaking skirmish mode and mix of

contemporary units and outlandish buildings, with military units as diverse as guard dogs, submarines and the wonderfully effective Tesla Coil, *Red Alert* was also a superb multiplayer game, one that introduced Westwood's easy-peasy-no-farting-about-with-IP-addresses gaming service.

But would we play it today? Probably not. For a fiver though, were there someone somewhere without a copy, we'd certainly recommend they purchase it, if only just to own what is and will always be one of Westwood's finest games.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZONE VERDICT

76

THEME HOSPITAL

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

NOBODY likes hospitals – except for the kind of weird people addicted to *Casualty* and *ER*. The sort that not only slow down when passing a car crash, but also get out, prod the wounds with a stick and take tourist snaps of protruding bones. The genius of Bullfrog's 1997 follow-up to *Theme Park* (back when all the talent had yet to leave to start off their own companies) was to turn all the pain and misery of hospitals on its head and combine pathologically addictive gameplay with funny ideas and a colourful presentation that never feels too childish.

The premise follows the basic blueprint that dozens of Theme and Tycoon style games have so unsuccessfully tried to copy over the

last few years: start out with an empty building and buy medical equipment, furniture, vending machines and so on, while at the same time hiring doctors, nurses and receptionists and investing money in new research. Just like in the cut-throat world of the NHS, you have plenty of targets to meet, and each level offers new challenges, as well as new wacky diseases and ways of treating them. For example, Slack Tongue requires a sort of guillotine, while Elvis impersonators will need qualified shrinks and a comfy couch. This is a classic that deserves to be revisited.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

80



Other people's suffering has rarely been more fun.

ROCK MANAGER

■ £9.99 | Pub: Softkey | ETA: Out Now

WITH A never-ending supply of Tycoon games pouring onto the shelves, offering industries as diverse as transport and trailer parks from which to earn a virtual fortune, it was never going to be long before some enterprising developer would 'Theme Up' the music industry.

Unfortunately, since Bullfrog weren't around to deliver the goods, it was left up to Swedish games combo Monsterland to bring us what ended up being, in effect, a poor cover version of Codemasters' cult 16-bit classic *Rock Star Ate My Hamster*, which quite frankly wasn't particularly noteworthy back in the day anyway.

The aim through *Rock Manager*'s eight 'missions' is to build a band and simply where it to the top of the hit parade by whatever means necessary. First you



The comic looking characters don't help much either.

select a song, draft in some band members, mix the tune, design a record sleeve, then hawk it around the radio and TV stations, offering bribes and presents until the songs hit the charts. A modicum of interest is added by having your spoof Gallagher brothers argue, or one of your hardcore punksters admit a liking for small furry mammals – problems that can easily be resolved. But for all the promising ideas and potential the subject matter offers, the developers managed to pull-off one of the most lifeless games ever. Another series of *Pop Idol* would be preferable to playing this game.

Richie Shoemaker



Even at this price *Rock Manager* really isn't worth it.

PCZONE VERDICT 20



More Teletubbies than Theme Park.

THEME PARK WORLD

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

UNLIKE *Theme Hospital*, this was made when most of the talent had left Bullfrog, making a mockery of the original *Theme Park* with garish, blocky graphics, a very console feel and none of the charm that made the first game such a joy. Sure, you've got a 3D engine so you can inspect your rides and even get a first-person view of a rollercoaster user, but it's poorly executed. It doesn't help that even the wildest rides are so slow you could take your granny on them without fear of her chucking her breakfast all over you.

That doesn't mean it doesn't hold your attention for a few hours, since the *Theme Park* mechanics are still all there. You research new rides, play about with the

salt content of the fries and the ice content of the colas, compete with local rivals for customers... But it doesn't take long before you're reduced to a maintenance person rather than enjoying the thrill of discovering new rides and seeing lots of little brats hand over their money before turning green. The original game's idea of opening parks all over the world – despite this one's title – is gone. Instead you have a couple of kiddie Theme choices to begin with (Halloween and Lost Kingdom) and have to unlock the other two (Fantasy and Space). I doubt anyone will bother though.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT 55



Use the tri-click swing system to drive straight through.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

HALF AN hour playing *TW2000* and it all comes flooding back. Back and forth we go across the green as yet another 6ft putt skirts the perimeter of the hole and sits there winking at you, teasing you to make the same mistake again. And invariably you do.

TW2000 is one of Electronic Arts' earlier attempts to lure the golfing anoraks away from the *Links* series, and it falls some way short. Putting aside, the 'Pro Swing' interface lets the game down hugely. Ultimately you have no choice but to revert to the ancient method of 'tri-click' which even back then felt clumsy.

Current simulations like *Links 2003*, with its beautifully weighted 'True swing'

interface is a much more pleasant proposition. If you have any experience of that or even the more recent Tiger Woods games, the simple fact is you'll be loath to go back in time. However, if you haven't sampled those delights, this may well prove a cheap and cheerful option. The graphics are passable, and the amount of courses and tournament options to choose from are commendable.

For a fiver you probably can't complain, but be warned, *TW2000* is an echo of the way PC golf used to be, and it's nothing to be particularly proud of.

Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT 60

LEFTOVERS

▲ PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

This month there are only two reprobates stinking out the bottom of the leftovers bin.

We start with *Dune 2000* (published by Sold Out, £4.99, out now), which, strangely enough, was actually released in 1998. After the success of *Dune 2*, which single-handedly launched the RTS genre, Westwood decided to 'remake' the game a few years later. Which of course meant the same game, different graphics, and a few FMVs. The visuals are fingernail-pullingly painful to look at, and the gameplay virtually identical to *Dune 2*'s, bar a few new features, such as the ability to group units. As for the FMVs, the phrases 'comically bad' and 'poorly acted' instantly spring to mind, with 'badly written', 'utterly unconvincing' and 'amateurish' following shortly after. With *Red Alert* available at the same price, you've no excuse or reason whatsoever to buy this game. 40 per cent.

So, can *Empire Of The Ants* do any better than its un-illustrious colleague? Well, not really, if I'm honest with you.

A 3D RTS of sorts, *EOTA* (published by Softkey, £9.99, out now) is set over two locations, on the earth's surface where you collect resources and battle against predators and the elements, and underground in the anthill where you control your colony through a set of keyboard controlled menus. While the above-ground graphics are just about passable (after all, grade E is a pass mark), the underground visuals resemble a collection of dots moving on a shit-brown background. If you love nature and micromanagement, then *Empire Of The Ants* may be worth a look. But just a quick one, you hear? Otherwise, there are plenty of other games on these pages, which are much more worthy of your bother. 52 per cent.



Dune 2000



Martin Korda Empire Of The Ants



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UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer evolution

MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens, we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving, and because of this, we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time.

This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review titles before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play, we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.

BATTLEFIELD 1942: THE ROAD TO ROME V1.3

■ £19.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Digital Illusions | ETA: Out Now | www.eagames.com | Players: 2-64

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and a LAN or 56K modem
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

Richie Shoemaker clicks his jackboots and says "there's no place like Rome"



Secondary positions in most vehicles are well protected.

REQUIRES ORIGINAL
Battlefield 1942



WE HAD three main criticisms of *Battlefield 1942* when it first came out: the dire AI, the demanding system requirements and the lack of a tactical interface. Apart from making the AI slightly less dire, *Battlefield 1942*'s first expansion pack has done very little to address these hindrances. You would have thought that by adding a measly six maps and the less than striking Italian and Free French armies, plus a few new vehicles to play with, that *Road To Rome* would have received a bit of a kicking. Not so, a brilliant multiplayer game is now even more brilliant and it's the subtle changes that have made all the difference.

Finding an online game is now much easier thanks to the improved browser interface, but the most important change is the greater effectiveness of infantry,

with some servers (too few, unfortunately) now supporting up to 64-player games. Players without the protection of armoured vehicles can provide an effective assault on their own, thanks in part to the new maps and the most recent patches.

Of course you don't need to buy the add-on to enjoy most of the improvements (the patches apply to the add-on and the original game), but what *Rome* lacks in quantity it more than makes up for in quality. If you've got the desired system requirements and have a fondness for online action, you really have no excuse. **[B+]**

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 126)	85
NEW MP SCORE	89
Less is more	

DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN

■ £34.99 | Pub: Novalogic | Dev: Novalogic | ETA: Out Now | www.novalogic.com | Players: 2-32

REQUIRES PIII 733, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and a 56K modem or LAN connection
DESIRES P4 1.5GHz, 512Mb RAM and an ADSL connection

Phil Wand is distressed to find that this is no match for *Battlefield 1942*

MULTIPLAYER



Sleeping on the job? You're going to pay.

There are shed-loads of servers and willing opponents/team-mates to play with/against, and the simplicity of the gameplay allows you to get on with the job in hand – wiping out the enemy. The weapon selection is also superb and allows great flexibility and diversity for you and your team-mates when it comes to equipping yourselves for each level.

Sadly though, you can't use a server browser for online play and must instead connect using NovaLogic's average web-based NovaWorld service.

If you've made the leap to *Battlefield 1942*, there's little point in buying this, as it lacks the charm, accessibility, graphics and stunning settings. However, despite its faults, it's still highly playable and the absence of the dreadful single-player AI raises the multiplayer game well above the average. **[B+]**

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 128)	52
NEW MP SCORE	70
A damn sight better than the solo game	

OCTOBER 3, 1993, and news from Somalia reverberates through the world's media. Two US helicopters have been shot down, and 18 crew are missing. Early reports suggest pilot error, witnesses on the ground having

described both choppers executing a victory roll to the tune of *The Star Spangled Banner* while simultaneously deploying a red and white striped cloth with the words "GOD BLESS AMERICA" emblazoned on it in 13m high letters. Then the news everyone feared: it wasn't a ghastly mistake, nor was it friendly fire. Some naughty people on the ground had shot the things down, and the world suppressed a titter.

Actually, all that Black Hawk business is

rather irrelevant here, the multiplayer side being devoid of downed helicopters, missing personnel, rescue attempts, Somalis, or in fact anything to do with the infamous events of 1993 which form the game's title. No, it's red team versus blue team, with a variety of play modes which will keep you occupied well into the early hours. Sadly though, you can't use any of the vehicles or aircraft, the maps lack imagination and the sound is average, yet strangely, it's still fairly entertaining, and far superior to the single-player game.

ENTER THE MATRIX



ATARI



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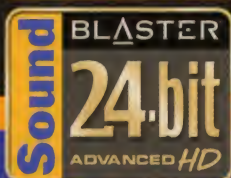
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FEEDBACK

The forum for your thoughts on all the latest games. **Martin Korda** tries to keep order

IT'S YOUR SHOUT

Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed over the past two issues. Whether you totally agree, or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. And all you have to do to get your views in print is send an email to letters@pczone.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to less than 100 words. Anything longer will either not be considered, or may have to be edited for size.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

REVIEWED ISSUE: 128
SCORE: 90%

What we thought

"Watching the 2D engine is as revelatory as a blind man seeing for the first time, or a virgin touching a girl after years of self-abuse."

What you said

Will Sports Interactive please explain to me why CM4 looks as though it's been designed by the sad f**king forum posters on sigames.com? Can they explain why they have buried what was quite a simple, fun game up to its neck in 'realism' and then pissed on its face by effectively removing the transfer system? Realism has its place, and that place is *MS Flight Simulator*. If anyone in the CM community thinks the fun in playing CM was that it was an accurate representation of football management, they are more deluded than I thought. CM4 is a game. A game I used to enjoy playing.

Stuart Granger

Champ Man has and always will be the king of sports games. That's not to say that it hasn't lost some of its charm, because it has, but after four games in a series that's to be expected. But I would recommend this game to anyone who loved the first three and all its expansion packs, as the match engine takes a classic game and makes it even better.

J Robins

Comment

So you're saying you don't like it then Stuart?

WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

REVIEWED ISSUE: 128
SCORE: 85%

What we thought

"Problems aside, *Warrior Kings: Battles* is one of the most compelling, strategically diverse and entertaining strategy games of the year."

What you said

I love this game. You were right about the niggly bugs with the individual unit AI and that there are some interface problems, but as a strategy game, there's nothing out

Warrior Kings: Battles. What an infuriatingly brilliant game. At first you think you can charge towards the capital and win the game in less than a day, and then you find out just how intelligent and cunning the computer AI generals are, as they thrash you time and time again, meaning you have to conquer other, easier provinces to move up the tech tree. The graphics are top notch and I love some of the bigger, beastly

"It blows away every other strategy game I've played in a very, very long time"

SEAN LEE LOVES HIS WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

there that can touch it. It blows away every other strategy game I've played in a very, very long time and is a hundred times better than the disappointing *Praetorians*.

Sean Lee

units. And don't forget the five-pronged tech tree. The only thing missing is a storyline, but I can live without one when the gameplay is this good.

Theodore the Merciless

I'm afraid I cannot agree with your score for *Warrior Kings: Battles*. 79-80 per cent would have been nearer the mark. I agree that it is very deep and strategic, but some of the unit AI is dreadful and the path-finding seems random. The tech trees are great, the battles exciting, but when you zoom out, you end up losing sight of who's who and troops often get lost behind trees and rocks. Worst of all is that the online games don't work. So all in all, a good game, spoilt by some sloppy oversights.

Ken Goddard

revolutionary pretence, it's just a good old-fashioned driving game."

What you said

Seventy six per cent for *TOCA Race Driver*? Seems a bit low, as it's a great game. No other racing game comes close. Take any F1 game, one shunt and it's race over. But in *TOCA* you can play dirty to gain an advantage. It's refreshing to see the AI makes mistakes too. In games like *Gran Turismo*, the opposition seems to run on rails and without mistakes. *TOCA*'s range of cars and tracks is vast. Let's not forget *TOCA* can be played on Gamespy as well. OK, the story's a bit lame but at least Codemasters is

trying something different. I think an extra 10 per cent is in order for what is the best racing game I've ever played.

Mike Agar

TOCA Race Driver is little more than a fun racing game with a crap story thrown in for good measure. There's nothing spectacular about it, although it's quite hard and the AI is great. I think 80 per cent would have been a fairer reflection as it is one of the better racing games, but I'm glad you didn't jump on the same bandwagon other mags were on when writing their reviews, saying this is verging on a being a classic racer. It's not, but it is worth buying.

Gareth Talbot

Comment

Were we a bit harsh on *TOCA Race Driver*? If you've bought or played the game, write in and let us know what you think. [E]



It's official, *Warrior Kings: Battles* is one of the best RTS games in a long time.



Damn UEFA and their stupid transfer rules.





REALITY CHECK: TANK DRIVING

Steve Hill does his bit for the war effort

WHAT'S A REALITY CHECK?

Reality Check is a monthly feature comparing PC Games to their real-life equivalents. Or at least, as close as we can get without risking serious bodily harm.

IT'S AN off-repeated maxim, but as a rule of thumb I don't get out of bed for anything less than a trip to America or the chance to operate heavy machinery. It's the latter that concerns us today, and machinery doesn't come much heavier than a tank. With the world teetering on the verge of Armageddon, it might seem somewhat flippant to be driving around in military vehicles to ascertain how they compare to their portrayal in PC games, but what are you going to do? Never surrender.

Incidentally, if you're new to *PC ZONE* and have no idea what we're talking about, Reality Check is a feature whereby real-life pursuits are compared to their virtual counterparts in a vaguely comic style. It's been in mothballs for the best part of a year after I snapped my collarbone like a twig on a previous assignment with a SWAT team. I'm still living my life in pain, but have agreed to make a comeback on the grounds that ample insurance is provided. That's the kind of sacrifice I'm prepared to make for you, the *PC ZONE* reader.

What I wasn't prepared for was the weather. Coinciding with the bleakest spell in recent British history, it's a snowbound field in the Home Counties that greets this hardy troop of wannabe

soldiers. Suffice to say, it's absolutely taters, and no amount of forced bonhomie can detract from that. What better way to shake off the cobwebs than a spin on the back of a snowmobile? It's a bracing experience, but that's not why we're here. Show me the tanks.

COLD WAR

Before we get to see them, we're driven round in the back of an Armoured Personnel Carrier, a vaguely claustrophobic experience that would be all the more traumatic in the midst of a war. We even get to drive one, which is an interesting experience, but not one I can see catching on. Various vehicles are put through their motions, but it's all much of a



REAL
VS



NOT REAL



It's not a tank, it's a self-propelled gun. Apparently.

HOW REAL IS... OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS

OPERATING HEAVY MACHINERY



It may be ugly but it's soooo real.

As a simulation of warfare, this is the business. The handling of the tanks is also spot-on, as a heavy-handed approach causes it to list from side to side in an authentically annoying fashion. There's also a genuine feeling of momentum, and a decent guttural sound emanating from within the steel beast.

SCORE

muchness, and it's basically like driving great big slow cars. Finally, the tank. Except it's not. Apparently, it's a "self-propelled gun". There are technical differences, but they are too tedious to remain in the memory for more than a few seconds. Ultimately, if it looks like a tank, sounds like a tank, and moves like a tank, then I'm happy to consider it a tank. Either way, it's not built for comfort, and lowering yourself into the cockpit is quite a strain for a fat lad. Once you're in though, it's a fairly simplistic affair. There's a

rudimentary gear system, a dodgems style accelerator, and two big sticks, which in the absence of a leather-trimmed wheel, can only be for steering. Pulling the left lever turns left, and the right lever turns right. Hydraulics fans might be interested to learn that they work by braking the relevant track, forcing the unchecked side to gain traction thus turning the tank in on itself. It takes a bit of getting used



I'll swap your APC for two bottles of vodka, comrade.



Just as Steve's broken collarbone heals up, it gets crushed again by a tank.

to, but if there's any confusion, pulling both levers back stops the tank. We didn't come here to drive slowly though, and with the pedal to the metal, the beast picks up a reasonable pace. A course has been set out, and sticking to the beaten track isn't as easy as it sounds, as over-pulling the levers causes the tank to list drunkenly as you attempt to compensate. A few dips have also been cut into the earth, and the idea is to drop in slowly, and accelerate out, a sensation that gives you an uncommon sense of power.

CRUSHED

I manage to get round with supreme confidence. In fact they actually said that I should be giving the lessons. However, a technicality – involving a driver who stalled six times giving his name to the instructor as Steve Hill (thanks for that) – ensures that I am not awarded the Driver of the Day, and so don't get to drive the tank over a discarded Ford Fiesta. Nevertheless, it's an impressive sight to behold, all crushed metal and shattering

glass, and I manage a minor contribution by taking to the wing mirror with the butt of my rifle, an action that causes some consternation among the supervisors, who remind me that guns are expensive and that I'm not on a council estate now.

TANKS FOR THE MEMORY

So what have we proved? That tanks are bigger and more dangerous than games. One person who has experience of both is SAS member Zippy (AKA Colin). As well as killing "Argies and Paddies", Zippy has dabbled with the likes

of *Operation Flashpoint*. So how would a trained killer make tank games better?

"Probably by giving you a more open perspective of it. It seems very closed in, you're looking through a periscope when you're driving the bloody thing or whatever. If they could give you a more open view where you can see everything and have a more open display. I know that's not the norm, but it would make it more exciting as a game because you could actually see what's going on while you control the tank. If you look at the more modern tanks they're like a videogame inside anyway." Except a lot colder.

HOW REAL IS... BATTLEFIELD 1942

KEEPING IT LIGHT ONLINE



Battlefield 1942 may be fun, but it's not very realistic.

Something of a mixed bag as a game, this is really only suited to the multiplayer experience. The tanks are plentiful, but they don't feel particularly effective due to some rudimentary handling. More like driving a slow car than a genuine military vehicle, it's mildly enjoyable but doesn't really convey the full tank-driving experience.

SCORE

"It's not built for comfort and lowering yourself into the cockpit is quite a strain for a fat lad"

HARDWARE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE

MARKING BENCHES



■ **HARD WIRED** Steve Spence

▲ The past few months have been exhausting, with new graphics cards turning up almost daily. Sounds good you might think but we have to pile each of these cards through our suite of benchmarks, a process which takes anything up to a full day's testing for each, and considerable head scratching on all sides.

Typically we test between six to eight games, spanning a range of genres and 3D techniques, in an effort to analyse and evaluate the latest and greatest, but in our reviews we've only talked in terms of a couple of known, popular applications.

Because real-world benchmarking is becoming of increasing importance to our tech-savvy readership we introduced a full page of benchmarks a couple of months ago, with six of the best tests we carry out on every card. At this month's E3 we're going to be talking to a number of developers to get a better insight on how their game engines utilise the products we test, as well as allowing us to tweak our suite of test applications to make sure we're pushing everything to its limits.

We're also going to introduce some new games, and showcase certain new DX9 engines to give some real-world DX9 metrics, so as always, watch this space.

"NVIDIA has gone so far as to say the card is almost inaudible. We'll be the judges of that"

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

The next wave of the GeForce FX is almost here and we're first with the breaking news. Here's all the juicy gossip for you...



With the GeForce FX 5900 Ultra, NVIDIA hopes to reclaim the limelight from ATI.

WHETHER IT WAS because of the cooler, the drivers or its late arrival to market, the NV30 AKA the much-vaunted GeForce FX 5800 Ultra didn't quite set the world alight as NVIDIA had promised. Granted it's a quick card, in optimal gaming settings faster even than the top-end Radeons, but not by the leaps and bounds necessary (especially considering the top-end price point) to retake the limelight ATI has held since they started shipping the 9700 Pro back in September last year.

As the first manufacturer to deliver such an ultra-complex GPU, based on the 0.13 micron manufacture process, it was always going to be a bit of an upward struggle, and six months since its announcement at Comdex, NVIDIA is ready to supersede the NV30 with a graphics chip known as NV35 – or in real-world terms, the GeForce FX 5900 Ultra.

The 5900 Ultra has more features than you might expect from what is essentially a six-month refresh. Intellisample and CineFX are now both in their second

generation, offering even better compression across a new 256-bit memory bus (double that of the NV30). The new board utilises up to 256Mb of DDR memory, but because of the increased compression and bus bandwidth the available memory bandwidth should be higher than any previous offering.

New to the NV35 is a technology known as UltraShadow. Using rectangular volume approximations, the GPU is capable of accelerating shadow calculations, something that could prove to be a real benefit in games that utilise lighting and shadows intensively, such as *Doom III*.

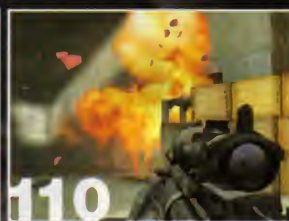
As you can already see from the boardshot, the card is nowhere near as hot, made evident by its simpler cooler, which looks like an enlarged version of the solution seen on the GeForce4. NVIDIA has gone so far as to say the card is almost inaudible, but we'll be the judges of that. Fingers crossed as well that their partners don't cut any corners when boards start appearing in early June. Expect a full review in the next couple of months.



ZONE BENCHMARKS
Check out who's performing



REVIEWS
Two GeForce cards head to head



DEAR WANDY
Got a problem you can't fix?



BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit, the lowest prices

DRIVER WATCH

Despite DX9 being in its infancy, there are plenty of driver updates out there

TREAT THIS MONTH as the calm before the storm. There are no updates worthy of your download time but we're expecting some in the next few weeks. With the final release of Canterwood, Intel will be making updates for the Pentium 4, as well as introducing a new driver for the ICH5/R.

With the release of the FX5900 Ultra looming, NVIDIA is also due to release a new driver build in the form of the Detonator FX series driver. ATI was due to release Catalyst 3.3 but canned it to concentrate on Catalyst 3.4, which should be available by the time you're reading this.

MOTHERBOARDS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
Intel	ICH2.INF	3.20.1008	1.49Mb	support.intel.com
Intel	ICH4.INF	4.04.1007	1.31Mb	support.intel.com
SIS	IDE	2.0.3	5.42Mb	download.sis.com
SIS	AGP	1.1.4	5.38Mb	download.sis.com
VIA	Hyperion	4.46	1.31Mb	www.viaarena.com

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
ATI	Catalyst	6.14.01.6307	5.62Mb	www.ati.com
ATI	Catalyst	6.14.10.4029	4.62Mb	www.ati.com
Matrox	Parhelia	1.03.00.043	8.22Mb	www.matrox.com
NVIDIA	Detonator 40	43.45	9Mb	www.nvidia.com

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
Creative	Audigy	11.2	12.67Mb	uk.europe.creative.com
Creative	Audigy 2	11.03.02.05	5.88Mb	uk.europe.creative.com
Hercules	Fortissimo	6.09	14.7Mb	europe.hercules.com

SNIPPETS

BRUTISH BULLDOG

Broadband is brill, as long as you live close enough to qualify for an ADSL line, but with the government being prodded by ISPs to put a stick in the sand and define how quick a connection needs to be to qualify as a 'phat pipe', it's ironic that one company is pushing the envelope even further offering something eight times

quicker than conventional ADSL.

Bulldog Communications (www.bulldogdsl.com) is offering a 4Mbps product, aimed at the hardcore who need a connection so fast it renders them almost electronically omnipotent. Initially available over only 100 or so exchanges, focusing on the London area, this new über-connection will set you back £66.99 each and every month, shifting a theoretical peak of half a megabyte per second.

DARTH PC

Up until the arrival of the Xbox, the line between PC and console was pretty clearly defined, but this month it looks as if that now blurry threshold could disappear altogether with the arrival of a new 'PC' which claims to be a cross between a console and a set-top box. Called 'The Phantom' it claims state of the art design and architecture, the ability to play PC games natively, ported console titles and downloadable media. While the manufacturer 'Infinium Labs' is adamant it's not a PC as such, current impressions would indicate otherwise. For more information check out www.infiniumlabs.com.

CREATIVE USB SOUNDBLASTERS



With most audiophiles spending a good £60+ on soundcards, the less technically adept generally opt for simpler offerings, in many cases a couple of notches above below-par integrated audio. Unfortunately the same group are the most unlikely to know how to fit new PCI cards into their systems, so Creative is launching new USB soundcards you can just plug in the back of your PC, the first of which is the Sound Blaster MP3+. Offering Stereo playback and recording capabilities, the new devices will be available at the beginning of June for £39.99.

TALKING PAGES

Microsoft unveils a new platform that speaks your language

MICROSOFT HAS just unveiled a new platform it's developing in conjunction with a number of system builders. Codenamed Athens, it's effectively a PC with native video and voice telecommunications, but it's much more than just the simple

integration of a phone and a webcam.

Using natural language processing, Microsoft has been able to produce software that creates email-style messages from voicemail. This might sound like something that only the suits are

going to get excited about, but by the time these PCs are in development most of you will probably be using voice-over-IP, which means the tie-in between existing software like Roger Wilco and Microsoft's new natural language processing suddenly

becomes a much more entertaining prospect. As well as the standard gaming advantages a system like this could really benefit disabled and deaf gamers, with speech commands converted into text that can be read and acted on.

Cynics among you might be tempted to look on this as just another bid by Microsoft to tie up every single media and communications appliance in existence, but we're not quite at the point of screaming 'monopoly' just yet. Athens is expected to be with us in a number of guises by early 2005, by which time the new Longhorn OS should also be available to adorn such machines.

"A system like this could really benefit disabled and deaf gamers"



PCZONE BENCHMARKS

Comprehensive new benchmarks for every new graphics card. Check back each month for updates...

THE MOST important aspect of a graphics card is, of course, the chip the board is based around. And the only way to work out if one chip is better than another is to run it through a stringent set of benchmarks. Which is what we've done.

OUR GUARANTEE

Because of the subtle differences in today's 3D cards, ensuring we're as accurate as possible is vital if we're going to be able to advise you fairly. Each month we'll update these as and when new cards or drivers are released, to show you which card is the fastest or the best value for money. You'll also be able to see where your card stands in comparison to all the new releases.

TEST SYSTEM

There's little point in testing out tomorrow's 3D chips on yesterday's hardware so we've chosen one of the quickest AMD processors out there – the Athlon XP 3000+ with the improved Barton core. By choosing such a cutting-edge chip we can increase the total range of scores and reduce CPU limitation, thus increasing accuracy. The other key area where a GPU can end up bottlenecked by the PC is raw memory bandwidth, to which end we've opted for the ASUS A7N8X, the best nForce2 implementation on the market.

CONFIGURATION

The next step is to standardise the method and level to which

boards are tested. Starting at the BIOS, all non-essential hardware is disabled and memory timings are pushed to their limit to maximise bandwidth and give the lowest latencies possible.

Secondly comes the operating system. After installing Windows XP, SP1 is installed, followed by DirectX9. We don't install a graphics driver until the entire system is prepared and imaged, but chipset drivers and USB drivers are rolled on, thus letting us restore a test machine quickly, and more importantly giving us the same software with which to test every new card.

With the OS installed and service packed, optimisations are made, including disabling System Restore, Automatic Updates, sound and networking,

plus little resident programs such as MSN Messenger. Virtual memory is fixed at 2.5x the system's total RAM.

When we're happy the system itself is fully stable and ready for testing, all the benchmark software is installed, patched and prepared for testing with custom ini files and timedemos where necessary.


Finally, the entire windows install plus benchmarks is imaged onto a backup server, providing us with a clean build of our benchmark system as and when we need it.

BENCHMARKING

With a system prepared, imaged and tested, it's time to install the first graphics board and driver. As a rule we only use the latest

WHQL certified files as this ensures we're testing with stable and bug-free drivers, though with new kit that isn't always possible. Of course, as soon as WHQL drivers are available we re-test it and adjust scores.

Each benchmark is run at least five times, with each number recorded and the 'spread' or deviation between scores calculated. As long as those five numbers fit within a certain tolerance (1% maximum) then we move onto the next set.

Between tests we restart the benchmark, and we reboot the system between changing resolutions or graphics settings as many games and benchmarks are prone to memory leaking which can throw all the scores askew. 

BENCHMARKS

TEST SYSTEM

HARDWARE

Processor AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 'Barton' 2167Mhz with 512Kb L2 cache
Motherboard ASUS A7N8X nForce2 Motherboard
Memory 512Mb Corsair PC3200 (DDR400 RAM), 2x256Mb DIMM in dual-channel operation
Hard Drive Western Digital 120Gb WD1200JB ATA100 hard drive with 8Mb cache, 7200RPM
Sound Disabled for all benchmarks

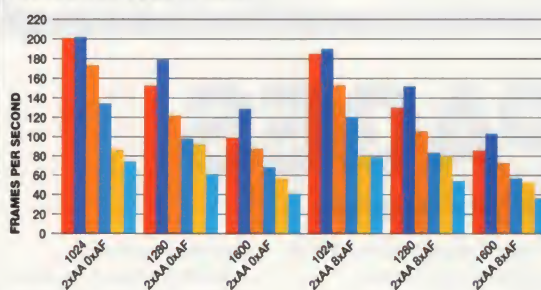
PLATFORM

Windows XP Professional Service Pack 1
 DirectX 9

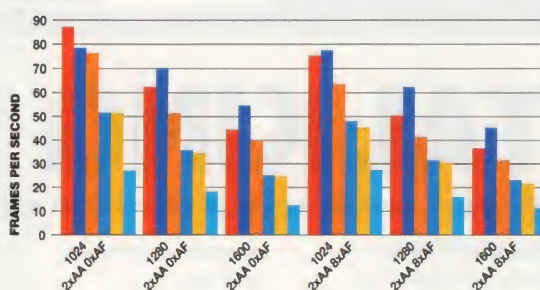
DRIVERS

ATI – Catalyst 3.1
 NVIDIA – Detonator 43.45

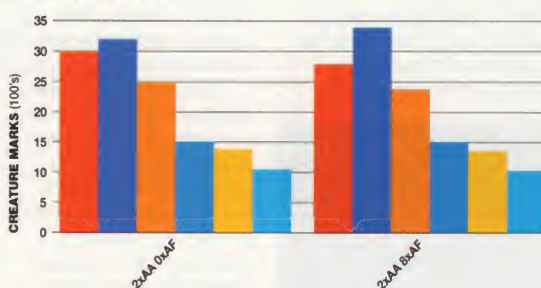
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003



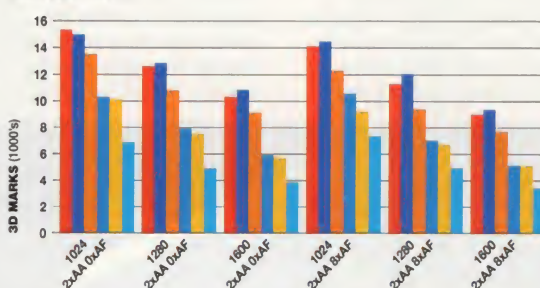
AQUANOX



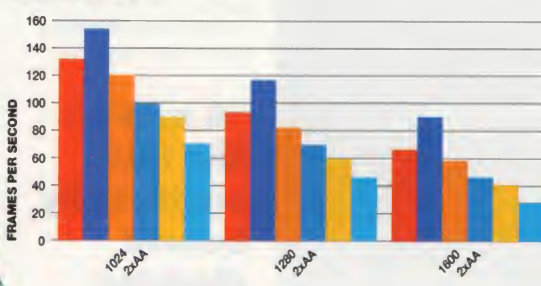
CODECREATURES



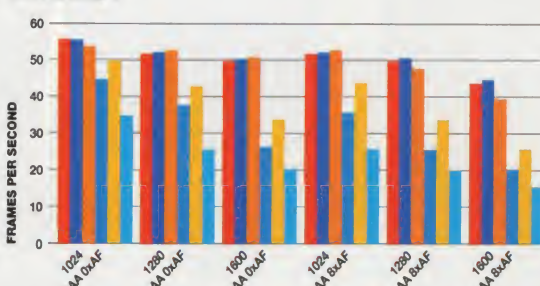
3DMARK 2001




SERIOUS SAM 2





COMANCHE 4





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 **GeForce FX 5800 Ultra**
 NVIDIA
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 **Radeon 9700 Pro**
 ATI
 £265

 **GeForce FX 5600 Ultra**
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 **Radeon 9500 Pro**
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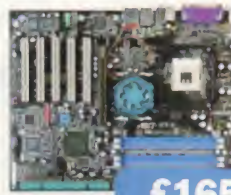
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Gainward Geforce FX 5200

- ▶ 128mb DDR RAM
- ▶ Golden sample model
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V9560 VIDEOSUITE

■ Price: £145 | Manufacturer: ASUS | www.asus.com.tw

All your video needs catered for in one bumper package

THE V9560 VideoSuite from ASUS, is based on NVIDIA's GeForce FX 5600 Ultra GPU. The board delivers full DirectX9 capabilities including Pixel and Vertex Shaders 2.0+, AGP8X support and 128Mb of ramsink-cooled DDR memories.

The selling point of the card however isn't solely its bristling list of DX9 gaming features, as ASUS has also bolted on all of the additional hardware to make the board a fully-fledged video solution.

Offering a pair of DVI ports as standard, rather than the single DVI single VGA seen on 99 per cent of other cards, it provides the optimal solution for a pair of digital flat screens – but will also be equally at home with monitors connected via the two supplied DVI-VGA dongles. The S-Video port has been replaced by a ViVo socket which when connected to the supplied

adapter provides S-Video and composite inputs and outputs, letting you hook in anything from video recorders to game consoles and pre-firewire video cameras.

However, the best video solution in the world is no use without the necessary software, so thankfully three different applications are provided – ASUS' DVDXP, Cyberlink's Power Director Pro and their Media Show applications, enabling the capture, editing and playback of all but the most niche of video formats.

Other extras include smart on-board cooling, which regulates the quiet on-board fan, based on the GPU temperature. There's also a 'video security' application that can record from inputted devices such as cameras.

GRAPHICS CARD

The 5600 Ultra is like any other NV31U in respect to gaming, and when benchmarked across our usual batch of games it

scored identically to the reference.

Bundled with *Morrowind*, *Ghost Recon*, *Rogue Spear*, *Worms Blaster* and *IL-2 Sturmovik*, this bundle is one of the most comprehensive we have seen in a long time, providing at least a couple of applications or games which should appeal to everyone, albeit briefly.

At a shave under £150, it's not the cheapest board, but pitted against the mainstream market leader, the Ti4200, it shines, working its Intellisample mojo to the limits and making it a decent option for gamers and multimedia users alike. **PC**

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **85**
Beyond 3D

FX5800-TD8X

■ Price: £282 | Manufacturer: MSI | www.msi.com.tw

It may be quiet, but there's not that much to shout about

TWO MONTHS ago we reviewed the MSI 5800 Ultra, which although impressive performance-wise, had some major issues with noise and price. So maybe it's time we turned our attention to its slightly slower and significantly quieter sibling, the GeForce FX 5800.

As with its NV30 Ultra, MSI offers a non-Ultra board, namely the FX5800-TD8X, which still delivers all the key DX9 features seen on other top-end boards.

Comparing specs, the FX5800 TD8X differs only in its core and memory speeds, dropping 100MHz from 500MHz core and 500MHz RAM (1GHz DDR) to 400MHz core and 400MHz RAM (800MHz DDR) – reducing theoretical throughput by almost a third. Visually the most obvious change is the cooler design. Where the Ultra utilised the highly controversial 'exhaust' cooling system, this new offering sports an alternative cooler which is almost identical to that utilised

on the professional tier Quadro FX2000, which is both very efficient and far less invasive.

The card is bundled with *Ghost Recon*, *Morrowind* and *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project*, as well as a gamut of utilities programs. There is provision both for digital and analog displays, alongside an S-Video out.

With both lower core and memory clocks, it's no surprise to see the 5800-TD8X fall behind the 5800 Ultra, 9700 Pro and 9800 Pro in the benchmark stakes, though not by the margins we initially expected. The simple fact is that even at 3GHz, the GPUs are often running far ahead of the other system components. However, it's not until you really crank the resolution up and move up to the likes of 2xAA 8xAF that a consistent

difference of around 15-20 per cent arises.

Overshadowed by the more powerful FX 5800 Ultra, it's clear to see that

the FX5800-TD8X will have a hard time, much as the Ti4400 did against the Ti4600. There are now 12 different DX9 GPUs available, spanning from less than £100 to more than £400 – and in the top half of that range, at almost £300, MSI hasn't really done enough to make its card stand out. **PC**

GRAPHICS CARD

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **73**
Sadly Uninspiring

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DEAR WANDY

There once was a man called Wandy, who helped people out of quandaries. His shirt was black and his trousers were packed, with spanners, a screwdriver and sundries

■ **MOO:** Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing.

Write to Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Email Address your letters to us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.



Hyper Threading provides a Nitrous Oxide boost to the Pentium 4.

SPIN CITY

Q AMD says its Athlon XP chips are optimised for Windows XP. Does this mean they will also give top performance in Windows 2000, since XP is built on its foundations? I don't want to upgrade to XP and sell my soul to Bill Gates for little or no gain in performance.

John Wilkinson

A According to the AMD marketing department, AMD and Microsoft collaborated during the development of XP to ensure that AMD processors were well-suited for the operating system. "Athlon processors were used in the design and development of the Windows XP operating system," is the PR fanfare. But wait. If you think about it, this is something pretty bloody obvious spun out to sound like it's pretty bloody important. Of course Microsoft used AMD processors to help them develop XP, just as they used Intel ones. In the same way that a new Nokia phone needs to talk to all the networks, a new operating system needs to work with all the processors – releasing a new product without testing it thoroughly would be unthinkable. Returning to your question, although certain processors are indeed optimised to behave in different ways depending on what they're

doing (and in what environment they're doing it), as a user you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference. So if you have a working copy of Windows 2000, want an Athlon XP but don't fancy mucking about with an OS upgrade, you won't be losing out – at least, not that you'd notice.

WAITING FOR GODKNOWS

Q I have a 2GHz Athlon XP, GeForce4 Titanium, 512Mb RAM, 32X CD-RW drive, DVD drive all running under Windows XP Professional. Just recently, I've noticed that my PC seems to slow down a lot – it's most noticeable when I'm playing music and I open something like Outlook Express or a web browser because the music starts chugging and stuttering. While this is happening I can still move the mouse but I can't actually click on anything. This is frustrating because it happens with every program I use, and it can take up to two minutes just to open a folder. I can't think what's causing it, and I've tried a full system scan with Norton, but it doesn't pick up on anything. I'm also current with all my windows updates. Any ideas what this extremely annoying bug is?

Mike Peters

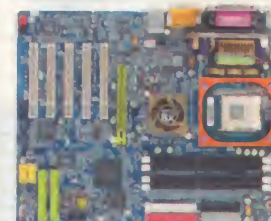
A It's quite common for Explorer to spasm and turn everything on your screen

into a mural – you point the cursor and pull the trigger, but for some reason your PC's attentions are elsewhere. And it isn't just XP. Locking the user out of the desktop has been a Windows party piece for almost a decade, and I can't imagine the next release of the world's perennially imperfect OS will show any improvement. Anyway. The first thing I'd do is ensure that Task Manager is chugging away in the background – when things lock up on you, its icon in the system tray will tell you if the CPU is thrashing or is at idle; by looking at the Performance tab you'll see a line graph charting processor activity over time. So hit CTRL+SHIFT+ESC to open the program and then minimise it. Now, when the freeze arrives, look down at the system tray to see if the little hamster's doing overtime – if so, open the Task Manager again, select the Processes tab, and then click the CPU column to order entries by how hungry they are. At the very end of the list you'll find the program that's leeching all the power. Highlight its name, make a note of it, and then click End Process. If no CPU is being consumed it's quite possible that a Windows service is causing the constipation. The WebClient service is a very common cause, so let's stop it and see if it makes a

difference. Hit Start, Run, type services.msc and press Enter. Scroll down to WebClient, right-click on it and choose Stop (if you want to permanently stop it, choose Properties and select Manual startup). You don't say whether you have a scanner attached to your PC, but I've found that stopping the Windows Image Acquisition service can also be beneficial. Drop in at www.dearwandy.com to let me know how you get on.

DOOM 3 WANNABE

Q Having put some money together I've decided to upgrade my PC – mainly because of your mouth-watering shots of *Deus Ex: Invisible War* in issue 127. Currently I have a 1.4GHz AMD Athlon processor,



Motherboards featuring the Intel E7205 chipset are known as Granite Bay and feature a dual-channel memory interface.

a GeForce2 and I'm running Windows ME. I have 256Mb RAM so I don't think that needs messing about with, but what do I need to do to run *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Doom 3*? I desperately want to play these games.

Anon

A It's rapidly becoming my catchphrase, but what you need is down to your expectations. If you're happy running the latest games at low to medium detail, then you don't need to spend much – you'll be able to keep your head above water with a £150 videocard and some

"What do I need to do to run *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Doom 3*?"



Task Manager shows exactly what your applications are up to.

"My computer has the annoying habit of freezing mid-game – it happens on most of the latest games"

moderate overclocking. That's the sensible route that your mum would take. If however you want to run monster stuff with every detail set to maximum, and have the frame rate in three digits with full-screen anti-aliasing, you're going to have to start pimping your arse down the docks for the grand or so you need to satisfy such cravings. Assuming a £1,000 budget, I'd use your existing memory – if the 256Mb you have is 266MHz DDR it will be hot to trot – in a Dual DDR board such as the Asus P4G8X Deluxe or Gigabyte GA-8INXP. Stick an Intel 3.06HT processor on top, and install Windows XP (you need XP for Hyper-Threading). You could save a little cash by going the AMD route and opting for a Barton, but the latest Athlons really aren't a patch on the latest Pentiums – the XP3000+ rating on the Barton is somewhat optimistic – and the only reason to stick with AMD would be because of your conscience. Whichever route you choose, I'd get a Radeon 9800 Pro for your graphics as it's easy to find, cheaper to buy than a GeForce FX, and my experience is that the ATI Catalyst 3.x drivers are as bullet-proof as an Abrams tank.

THE BIG FREEZE

My computer has the annoying habit of freezing mid-game. This is especially frustrating when it happens on games like *Raven Shield* (where you can't save mid-mission). It happens on most of the latest games, though it seems to be fine with older titles. The freeze requires a hard restart and the usual wait for scandisk to do its thing. There seems to be no pattern – sometimes it happens, sometimes I'm lucky. Anyway, I have the latest drivers for all my kit – the latest VIA Hyperion 4.46 drivers and the latest AMI BIOS



The all-UK crouching contest entered its final stages.

for my motherboard. My computer comprises an Athlon XP2100+, 1GHz RAM, Radeon 8500, Audigy Platinum, all sitting on an MSI KT3 Ultra ARU motherboard. I use Windows XP Home and have all updates. I've done everything I can think of to resolve this but have run out of options. I've a sneaky feeling it might be something to do with VIA chipsets and ATI graphics boards, but have no proof. Maybe I'm just looking for an excuse to go NVIDIA! Any help would be really appreciated.

Darren Smith

The hardware combination you described in your letter requires a 350W power supply as a bare minimum; the comprehensive report you supplied with your email (generated by shareware from www.dr-hardware.com) shows a simply staggering array of hungry devices, including a DVD writer, CD writer, wireless LAN, an armada of IDE hard drives, numerous SCSI devices – and that's before the Radeon or the MSI mainboard itself! It would be facile to say that you're compensating for something, but the truth is that packed systems are prone to problems – voltage drops, IRQ sharing and heat build-up could be mission critical issues

here. A friend has a Radeon 8500 All In Wonder on a KT3 board together with more add-ons than a Halfords superstore – and it's always falling over, locking up and rebooting without any obvious warning signs. If I were you, I'd make sure that the voltage to your AGP bus is correct, that you have directed airflow and sufficient cooling inside your case, that you remove the CPU fan from the CPU and reseal it with Arctic Silver, and that you buy yourself a new 460W Enermax PSU. After that, download a tool such as SysMetrix from www.xymantix.com (it's freeware) to keep an eye on things – your board features hardware monitoring and you'll be able to see exactly what's going on. You might also like to consider amalgamating three of your hard drives into one large one, and as a last resort, check that your memory isn't on the friz because the KT333 does work best on high quality RAM.

INTERFERING BASTARD

My system is a 1.4GHz AMD Athlon, Abit KT7A-RAID, GeForce4 Ti4400, Creative 5.1 Sound Blaster and

WANDY'S TOP TIP

TIPS FOR 2000

I'd thought I'd send my fellow readers a list of useful

Windows 2000 tips – those that make my life a lot easier!

1. If you have plenty of windows and folders open, you can hold down CTRL and click on their taskbar entries to select more than one. Right-click just one of the entries and choose Close. (I never realised you could do this – Wandy.)

2. Windows Key + D minimises and reopens all programs.

3. If you miss themes support from Windows 2000, open the Start menu, click Run, type "themes".

4. Putting in a game or audio CD but don't want it to "autostart"? Hold down the SHIFT key when you insert the disc.

5. Want to quickly add things to the Start Menu? Drag a folder onto it.

6. How about a dedicated Games toolbar for the taskbar? Create a new folder on the desktop called Games. Then, drag shortcuts from all your games into the folder. Right-click on the taskbar, select Toolbars from the menu and then select New Toolbar. Browse to your new Games folder, and hey presto! Right-click the toolbar's name and select View, then Small Icons. Grab the drag-handle and drag it all the way to the right. Now, whenever you want to play a game, click the toolbar name and all the links will appear.

7. On Windows 2000, as Administrator, make a new user called games. Keep this user account only for games playing, and maximise your gaming experience on this account by removing all startup programs. (Another excellent tip – Wandy.)

Leon McComish

Wandy says: A very crisp £50 note, printed only this morning and ironed by me, is winging its way to you as you read this.

Send in your Top Tip to Dear Wandy and win yourself £50.

1024Mb SDRAM. My OS is Windows XP. My problem is that whenever I try and play any game like *Counter-Strike*, my computer sends out a signal that can be picked up on 567MW. It's not me who listens to this radio station – it's my dad. And he gets a strange "whistling" whenever I'm on the machine so he tells me to turn it off. Could you please help me find a solution to this problem, one that doesn't involve smashing up my dad's wireless? I've tried different radios and the problem persists. So it's not that.

Luke

There's no actual problem – medium wave radios (and indeed some TVs) will suffer interference problems in the modern world, and the hissing you hear on MW is the reason everyone left for FM stations years ago. Consider that every PC is a maelstrom of rapidly oscillating signals whizzing along different wires, and because these

signals are digital – binary

GO! GO! GO!
WTF??? NEWBIE
LAMER SUX!!!

Are you suffering from Radio Ga Ga?



'on' or 'off' communication – the wave formations are square and harbour all manner of nasty harmonics. Inside any one computer you may have 133MHz FSB, 66MHz AGP, 33MHz PCI, 8MHz ISA and so on, not to mention whatever your videocard is pumping out. But all is not lost, as there are a number of things you can do to cut down on interference – the simplest option being to buy your dad a new, battery-operated FM radio. If he's not happy with that, make sure your case is a metal and not plastic, and that all its component parts are screwed together tightly. You might also line the side and top panels with tin foil and then ensure that any cables running to it are as short as possible. Make sure that power cables are not coiled, and check that you're using a high-grade PSU – cheaper power supplies lack electrical suppression circuits and can cause havoc with nearby TVs and stereos. Lastly, make sure that your PC is as far away from the radio as possible. For more information visit www.radio.gov.uk and see their document entitled, Guidelines for Improving Television and Radio Reception.

Visit Dear Wandy online at www.dearwandy.com



WATCHDOG

All companies are scum. And they're out to get you. Well, according to these enraged readers they are...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

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READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

GAINWARD GONE WAYWARD

It's bad enough that they cost so much but graphics cards are the only real way to 'future proof' your PC in the short- and mid-term. So imagine poor Mr K Wells - he splashed out £300 on a Gainward graphics card only for it to suddenly give up the ghost.

After actually managing to track down Gainward's UK operation on the phone, he was finally given a RMA number and was told it would take up to two weeks to replace the card or be provided with a free upgrade if Gainward couldn't fix it.

Fast forward five, yes, five weeks and poor Wells has had bugger all back from the company. He's phoned on numerous occasions and has been given various reasons/ excuses as to why his pride and joy has yet to turn up on his doorstep.

He was even told to call the mother company in Germany



A simple choice - play Counter-Strike or be forced to watch EastEnders four times a week? Hmm...

Germany and we usually hit the 28 day guarantee we quote, although we are expecting to bring this turnaround time down significantly."

They do confess that Gainward is a "leaner operation than most people might imagine" and is a young but growing company: "We

got it," explains Williams. "It is now just three days before the delivery date and I have been informed of horrific changes to the NTL broadband service - they have reduced their maximum download bandwidth to one gig."

And William is furious about it - after all, how else can he

with this one gig usage guideline. "It effectively reduces the amount of data that users can download in a day on the 1Mbit service (for example) by 90 per cent reckons William. "Could you please contact the company and find out what this horrific torture is all about?"

Well, NTL is unrepentant and is sticking to its new policy: "For the vast majority of broadband users, the download guidelines are not even an issue but they are necessary to maintain quality for the vast majority," reckons NTL. "There is a tiny minority of exceptionally heavy users whose continuous or prolonged data downloading may cause network congestion and affect the enjoyment of others."

The one gig move is to "help" customers avoid "inadvertently causing network congestion." Now that's a beautiful piece of PR speak there, ladies and gentlemen. In the meantime, NTL says that if it didn't take such measures, selfish heavy users would drive up the prices for the normal users. So there you go William. If you're not happy, see what the competition can do for you. NTL ain't budging. For now...

"It is now just three days before the delivery date and I have been informed of horrific changes to the NTL broadband service"

WILLIAM, NOT HAPPY WITH NTL'S ONE GIG RESTRICTIONS

only to discover that the service spods only spoke... yep... German: "Five weeks and I am now getting some serious withdrawal symptoms from the lack of Counter-Strike," states Wells. "I have taken to quiet evenings in front of the telly with my wife ie East***** four times a week! Please can you save my marriage and get my graphics card back for me?"

Blimey, lost in soap opera hell? His marriage falling to pieces? Gainward, what the hell have you got to say for yourself?

"Gainward UK are a four man sales and marketing arm who also offer limited tech support with RMAs predominantly dealt with in Germany," says a spokesperson for the company. "All RMA replacements come from

have had a couple of people who had a similar problem [with returns] and traced it to an employee in the German office who, after verbal and written warnings, has now had to be let go from the company."

In the meantime, they should have sent you a new and upgraded card for all your troubles. They hope this goes some way towards restoring your faith in the company.

NTL RAISING HELL?

The Lord giveth. And the Lord taketh away. Or in this case, NTL actually. And according to reader William Skates, the company has more in common with the horned one than the big fella upstairs.

"I've been waiting for broadband for more than three years now and I finally

download gigs-worth of mods, add-ons and porn movies with such restrictions? [Hold on, did he actually say that last bit? - Ed] According to our Will, he's not the only one who is unhappy



Is this the true face of NTL? Some customers are beginning to wonder...

POLAR APART

It's rare but sometimes a reader will write in not because they want something sorted pronto but just to get their consumer woes off their chests. Take Steve Glover who ordered a memory stick for his PC from Polar Technology.

"When it arrived, it was the wrong sort," says Steve. "Slightly miffed, I rang them and got a returns number. The stick was posted to Polar by recorded delivery the next day. Several days later, my DDR RAM arrived and it's all been 'gravy' ever since. Until now."

Last week, Steve received his credit card bill that detailed a £90 debit by Polar Technology:

THE ACCUSED



a division of **WATFORD** electronics



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GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

▲ EVEN A BLIND SQUIRREL FINDS AN ACORN EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE...

When is an add-on not an add-on? When the publisher decides half-way through development that it's worthy of a full stand-alone release. And a full game price tag. Take *IL2 - Forgotten Battles*. Back in October 2002, reader 'Zoo' preordered the then add-on at Gameplay for £14.99.

Come February this year, Ubi Soft hiked the price to £29.99 and made it a stand-alone product. Due to 'human error' at Gameplay, the site wasn't updated with this new info and they left the game with the original quoted price of £14.99 for several weeks: "Gameplay had an overwhelming response from annoyed customers and have now decided to honour all those that pre-ordered at £14.99!" exclaims Zoo. "It's nice to see a major company being accountable to its customers."

Well, Watchdog simply couldn't agree more. Nice work, Gameplay.

"Now I knew that I hadn't ordered anything so I rang them immediately," says Steve. "It eventually transpired that the memory stick I had originally returned was never booked into their warehouse 14 months ago so they went and took the money for it months afterwards!"

Steve was then asked if he had proof that he had sent it back to them: "I suggested that keeping receipts from that long ago wasn't likely and what the hell were they doing telling me this now. 'Oh, we've had a backlog,' they said. That's a bloody disgrace!"

He was told that he could get a tracking number from the post office but has subsequently been told by the mail bods that it's not possible: "My point is if you do have to return anything by recorded delivery then keep hold of your tracker slip for the next ten years - in case the company you are returning it to has a warehouse and inventory control system run by lobotomised, three-toed sloths on tranquilisers!"

Polar Technology's explanation of the events leading up to the credit card debit are different. Of course. According to the firm, "our records show that the correct item was booked out of stock in the first instance, but Mr Glover says he got the wrong one. We sent him a replacement and held his card number as security in the event that the original did not come back. The original did not come back so we took the money."

They say they have asked for proof of return but you have none to hand, Steve. Therefore, they are unable to go any further with the complaint. Watchdog thinks that while Polar Technology are more than within their rights to take the cash, the gap in between the delivery and the payment should never have been so long. Hopefully,

such 'backlogs' are now a thing of the past...

ROPY COVERDISKS...

"Computer magazine freebie CDs or DVDs are among the worst engineered and are notoriously unreliable," Christopher Santos claims to have been told by the customer services at Coventry's PC World.

This slanderous claim was triggered when Chris took a new DVD drive he had bought from PC World back to the store after a cover disk refused to work. On arriving there, he was confronted by two unhelpful members of staff.

"They claimed the magazine disc was of poor quality but when I tried it in two new machines on display, it worked perfectly," recalls Christopher. "I explained that the drive was



"Our discs are tested thoroughly during development. We would not send a master to be manufactured if we believed it was unstable," says Alan Stonebridge from Dennis' EPU department.

purchased specifically to try PC magazine freebie discs on, but they claimed those discs were rubbish and really did not want to help me any more."

Christopher thinks that if they were so adamant that his drive was not at fault, why didn't they offer to replace it with another model and resell it as a fully guaranteed exchange product? "I have written to the manager of PC World Coventry and also their group managing director about my concerns," says Chris. "I have received no reply."

Well, off we went to PC World to find out if they really are bad

mouthed coverdisks: "We tested Mr Santos' DVD drive using a variety of media," says a spokesperson for the company. "On each occasion the drive worked perfectly, although we did not test the free DVD that Mr Santos describes. We offered Mr Santos a full refund, exchange or credit note following his enquiry."

They say though that you have subsequently sold on the drive to a chum which would imply that the DVD drive was in satisfactory working order. As for the staff claims that coverdisks such as ours are dodgy, they say: "Clearly we don't wish to imply that free coverdisks are sub-standard, but in the absence of any fault with the DVD drive itself, we must conclude that there was an issue with the disk rather than with the player." Hmm...

TROUBLE IN SAVASTORE

New DVD rewriter. Check. Promptly delivered by Savastore. Check. The damn thing doesn't work. Oh dear, thinks Stuart. I'll just pop it in the post and send it back for a new one. "I returned it to Savastore for a refund on January 14 2003, by Special Delivery and at my expense of £6.45," explains Stuart. "I was under the impression that this postage fee would be reimbursed to me due to the item being faulty."

Unfortunately, there was a wee problem with the amount refunded to him: "I paid £198.57 for the

item, but was only refunded the current price of £189. In addition, I have not had a refund of the postage as required, resulting in the refund being £16.02 short." He has tried e-mailing the company but has heard sod all back from them.

Over to Savastore: "Many apologies for the problems you have encountered, Stuart," says the company. They have looked into the refund details and can see that there has been an error.

"I paid £198.57 for the item but was only refunded the current price of £189"

STUART
WHO'S NOT TO HAPPY WITH HIS NEW DVD REWRITER FROM SAVASTORE

"We can arrange for this to be credited back," offers Savastore. "As for the postage charge, we can arrange for this to be credited as well." So, Stuart, you should have all your cash back by now. If not, well, you know what to do... [X]

Savastore is making one reader feel like a bit of a cashcow...



BUYER'S GUIDE

We've performed massive surgery on our Buyer's Guide to give you an even clearer picture of what makes up the dream games machine. We've got three categories for each component, giving you the Best Performer, the Best Buy and the Best Budget. If you think we've got something wrong, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk, and if we print your suggestion we'll give you a GeForce 4 card from Gainward

	BEST PERFORMANCE	BEST BUY	BEST BUDGET
INTEL MOTHERBOARD	 <p>P4T-533C STREET PRICE £123 MANUFACTURER ASUS TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.asus.com</p> <p>Following the success of its Intel-850-based P4T, ASUS release a revision based on the i850e chipset for the new 533MHz FSB Pentium 4s. With support for PC1066 RAMBUS and AGP4x, the P4T-533 manages to stand head and shoulders above the competition thanks to clever board design and high-quality components. If you have to have the best then you have to have this.</p>	 <p>845E MAX2-BLR STREET PRICE £112 MANUFACTURER Microstar International TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688 WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw</p> <p>The Max2-BLR from MSI is one of the most rounded Intel 845E packages we've seen. Based on the newest revision of the DDR-supporting chipset for the latest 533MHz FSB chips, MSI has brought in some clever extras including onboard 5.1 sound. The addition of Bluetooth allows wireless connectivity to enabled gadgets, plus readiness for a range of peripherals.</p>	 <p>GA-8IEX STREET PRICE £91.64 MANUFACTURER Gigabyte TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk</p> <p>Just because you're working to a tight budget, don't think you have to settle for second best. If you're after an entry-level Pentium 4 then you could do worse than check out the excellent GA-8IEX from Gigabyte. Along with support for the new 500MHz FSB chips and DDR memories comes integrated Creative 5.1 sound and 10/100 network plus six USB2.0. For less than £100 you can't do better.</p>
	 <p>PENTIUM 4 3.06GHZ (WITH HYPERTHREADING) STREET PRICE £499 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403 000 WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk</p> <p>As the first CPU to break the 3GHz barrier we knew this 3066MHz chip from Intel would be fast. Incorporating a new technology - Hyperthreading - these new CPUs are capable of running like a dual-processor set-up, taking multitasking performance and responsiveness to whole new levels.</p>	 <p>PENTIUM 4 'A' 2GHZ STREET PRICE £149 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403 000 WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk</p> <p>Pentium 4 'A' (or the 'Northwood' core as it's known) has doubled the cache of the previous-generation chips. Based on a 400MHz bus, the 2GHz chip is compatible with any of the i845/e i850/e motherboards and would be more than respectable in any gaming system. Look at the price difference between this and the top-end Intel chip on the left. Frightening isn't it?</p>	 <p>CELERON 1.8GHZ STREET PRICE £61.49 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403 000 WEBSITE www.intel.co.uk</p> <p>With a quarter the cache of the newest Pentium 4s, the Celeron 1800MHz may not seem like it has the necessary guts for a decent gaming system but nothing could be further from the truth. At entry level these chips are a cost-effective way of getting an i845e/i850e system together, which can be upgraded to P4 later simply by swapping chips. It's a brilliant compromise solution.</p>
AMD MOTHERBOARD	 <p>ASUS A7N8X STREET PRICE £118 MANUFACTURER ASUS TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.asus.com</p> <p>It's been a long time coming but everything good is worth the wait and finally we've got our hands on the nForce 2 in the form of the A7N8X from ASUS. Bringing everything NVIDIA has promised including DualDDR DDR400, AGP8X, dual LAN, Firewire, USB2.0 and other added goodies such as Serial-ATA, this new board sits numero uno thanks to an excellent feature set and blistering performance.</p>	 <p>K7N420PRO STREET PRICE £83.42 MANUFACTURER Microstar International TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688 WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw</p> <p>As the top nForce board, the K7N420Pro from MSI beat every KT266/266A offering we put it against. Add to the great performance an integrated GeForce2MX graphics chip plus separate AGP 4x slot, 100Mbit LAN, integrated 5.1 sound, and you'll agree it's perfect for seasoned enthusiasts and first-time gamers alike. Watch out for the nForce 2 boards, arriving next month though.</p>	 <p>GA-7TXH STREET PRICE £83 MANUFACTURER Gigabyte TELEPHONE 01908 362 700 WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk</p> <p>Usurps another great Gigabyte board - this one is a fantastic Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative, which is plenty good enough for gamers. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR266 boards for Athlon. A complete bargain if you're looking to build a cheap system around an AMD processor.</p>
	 <p>ATHLON XP 3000+ 'BARTON' STREET PRICE £488 MANUFACTURER AMD TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.amd.com</p> <p>Hot on the heels of Intel's top 3GHz part comes the Athlon XP 3000+ 'Barton' from AMD. With an improved core featuring 512Kb of cache, the new chips operate at a slightly lower frequency to the Thoroughbred B stepping. However, with double the L2 memories of their predecessors the new chips are the fastest AMD have produced.</p>	 <p>ATHLONXP 2200+ STREET PRICE £82 MANUFACTURER AMD TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.amd.com/gb-uk</p> <p>Running at 1.866GHz, the 2200+ AthlonXP is the quickest of AMD's original AthlonXP chips. Boasting both Quantispeed and 3DNow! Architectures plus fast cache and a 266MHz bus speed, most existing Athlon motherboards will support it out of the box. In terms of bang for your buck this provides the best middle-ground solution for gaming that money can buy.</p>	 <p>ATHLONXP 2000+ STREET PRICE £65.50 MANUFACTURER AMD TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.amd.com/gb-uk</p> <p>Low-end Pentium 4s and AthlonXP's are now getting so cheap they rival the Durons and Celerons of this world - and that's exactly what we have here. AMD has traditionally been the cheaper of the two processor giants, and the AthlonXP 2000+ (top-end equipment not so long ago), is still a bargain even though the price has recently gone up.</p>
HARD DRIVE	 <p>WD1200JB 120GB STREET PRICE £115 MANUFACTURER Western Digital TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.wdc.com</p> <p>With your game and media collections growing every day - some game installs use more than 2Gb of your precious storage - what you need is a really big, fast hard drive and that's exactly what Western Digital deliver with the WD1200JB. 8Mb of cache and spin speeds of 7200RPM mean that this 120Gb beast thrashes all competition beating a large proportion of SCSI drives too.</p>	 <p>BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB STREET PRICE £67.50 MANUFACTURER Seagate TELEPHONE 01628 890 366 WEBSITE www.seagate.com</p> <p>An old favourite at PC ZONE, the Barracuda ATA IV is packed full of clever technology, which allows this 60Gb beastie to spin at the heady heights of 7,200RPM while sounding much less obtrusive than many 5,400RPM units. Don't underestimate the difference this can make. If you're still struggling with space this could well be worth a dip.</p>	 <p>U SERIES 6 40GB STREET PRICE £64 MANUFACTURER Seagate TELEPHONE 01628 890 366 WEBSITE www.seagate.com</p> <p>The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, and find themselves replaced in the hallowed PC ZONE Buyer's Guide pages by its younger brother the Series 6. With the same specs as the Series 5 these new drives run even quieter and cooler than before, and provide what must be considered the minimum amount of storage space for any self-respecting gaming system.</p>



World's Most Powerful VGA ever...



Worldwide No.1 VGA Card Manufacturer

BEST PERFORMANCE



DVDRW228

STREET PRICE £225.99
MANUFACTURER Philips
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0101
WEBSITE www.philips.co.uk

If you're looking for a flexible and future-proof bit of removable storage, this is the box to plump for. It has DVD+RW and DVD-R capabilities, which provide you with up to 4.7Gb of space per disc from a 22 minute burn. It can also handle CDR/RW at 12x and 10x respectively, and the IDE installation is a doddle. At more than £200 it's not cheap but it's a competent performer and as an all-rounder does the job brilliantly.



CRW3200E-VK

STREET PRICE £86.94
MANUFACTURER Yamaha
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.yamaha-europe.com

It might not be as fast as the Plector drive but this is still a superb buy. Yamaha has consistently been praised for making great long-lasting CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the companies' current range-topper. The overall bundle is excellent but we particularly love its Audiomaster burning mode for cutting high-quality audio CDs – and we're sure you will too. A veritable bargain if ever we saw one.



40X12X48 CDRW

STREET PRICE £45.82
MANUFACTURER LiteOn
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.liteonit.com

The LiteOn 40x12x48 offers stunning value for money, costing slightly more than many standard CD-ROM drives. While maybe not as feature-packed as the Plector and Yamaha it does have a few tricks up its sleeve, including Smart-Burn – a technology which assesses media quality and adjusts burn speeds to reduce coaster ratio. The best low-cost drive that money can buy.

CD REWRITER



FX5800 ULTRA-TD8X

STREET PRICE £359
MANUFACTURER MSI
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

If you want the fastest, most feature rich 3D card look no further than the GeForce FX5800 Ultra. With support well beyond the minimums of DirectX9, NVIDIA's latest high-performance GPU beats the competition hands-down. MSI's distillation of the technology offers a huge bundle of software and utilities, and is around £50 cheaper than the competition.



VERTO T14200 64MB

STREET PRICE £98
MANUFACTURER PNY
TELEPHONE 01256 338 609
WEBSITE www.pny-europe.com/uk

The Verto T14200 64Mb GeForce4 from PNY is a relatively late arrival. Coming within 20 per cent of T14600 in many benchmarks, but costing up to half the price, it has all of the features of the quicker GPU without the dent in your wallet. Overall, we think this is the best solution if you're looking to future-proof your system without spending a ridiculous amount of cash along the way.



EXCALIBUR RADEON 9000 PRO

STREET PRICE £83
MANUFACTURER HiTech
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.hitech.com.hk

The Excalibur Radeon 9000 Pro may not be the fastest DirectX8.1 board but it's certainly the cheapest. Coming in at well under the price of the equivalent Hercules board, it sports ATI's new mainstream GPU and 64Mb of 275MHz DDR (500MHz). This HiTech board is a great step-up to playing shader-dominated games for the budget-conscious.

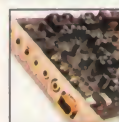
GRAPHICS CARD



AUDIGY 2 PLATINUM EX

STREET PRICE £174
MANUFACTURER Creative
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

The new Audigy 2 Platinum eX is a slight departure for Creative in that it's engineered a new card for its top-end product. With all the features of the mainstream Audigy2 product including 6.1 sound and DVD-Audio, a more exty-styled breakout box plus a strong composition bundle Creative has created a product which is fantastic for both die-hard audiophiles and gamers.



AUDIGY2

STREET PRICE £85.50
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The original Sound Blaster Audigy sat in this slot from the day it arrived, only to be replaced by its next of kin, Audigy2. Delivering further improved audio quality, though this time over 6.1 channels of Dolby Digital EX, Audigy2 is the first soundcard to receive THX certification and deliver the fidelity required to reproduce new formats such as DVD-Audio. Pound-for-pound it's the best gaming soundcard in the world.



GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II DIGITAL EDITION

STREET PRICE £32
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881

WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com
 As a frequent offender on the PC ZONE Buyer's Guide, the Fortissimo II lived in the Best Bargain slot for many months – only to be replaced by its doppelgänger the Fortissimo II Digital Edition – which adds 5.1 for your DVDs and an even better software bundle.

SOUNDCARDS



INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER V3.0

STREET PRICE £37
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

Probably the cheapest upgrade you can perform, but if you're playing with a rubbish mouse it could give you the biggest performance increases. Hardcore gamers love the Intellimouse Explorer v3.0, and we have to agree that it's the best ball-less rodent out there. With improved optical sensors, a better shape and even more responsive buttons it's in a word – fragtastic.



MX500

STREET PRICE £32
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Microsoft might dominate the mouse market but it hasn't got everything its own way. The MX500 is one of the most interesting mice we've seen for a while now. The left and right buttons are hidden – being integrated into the upper shell of the body and on top of the fourth and fifth buttons. There are two either side of the wheel to assist scrolling, plus one that emulates Alt-Tab. Very handy.



OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE

STREET PRICE £27
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

For gamers who don't need five buttons and a portable back-scratcher on their mice, we present the Optical Mouse Blue. With all of the high-tech optical wizardry of the other Microsoft mice, this funky blue three-buttoned offering is extremely comfortable to use and is perfect for RPG/RTS titles – or FPS-ers who prefer to keep most of their controls on the keyboard.

MICE



PRO KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE £50
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 0800 039 1010
WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk

While it may seem odd to have a Mac product among all this PC goodness we have good reason. Rather than fall around with 15 multifunction buttons which don't help at all in fast-paced gaming, the Pro Keyboard from Apple is simply the best USB offering out there. Quality components make it one of the most quiet and compact offerings money can buy. Remember, you get what you pay for.



OFFICE KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE £27.20
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

Microsoft's office keyboard may seem more focused at the professional market with the MS Office buttons across the top, but we found the scroll wheel and remappable keys brilliant in many games – in some situations acting like an additional mouse wheel, one for weapons, the other for items. Handy shortcuts abound and brilliant all-round performance make this our new Best Buy.



MULTIMEDIA KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE £21.14
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

The Multimedia Keyboard can only be described as the geek's friend. With support for many of the Windows XP customisations plus dedicated buttons for the instant messenger app of your choice and a central console of buttons to drive media player, life doesn't get much simpler, and, at under £25, not much cheaper either. If you're struggling with a poor keyboard give the pub a miss for one night and get this.

KEYBOARDS



WINGMAN CORDLESS

STREET PRICE £34.07
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

The PC might not have a definitive gamepad just yet, but this is as close as it gets for the moment. The infra-red interface doesn't hinder your input. On the contrary, the fact it's wireless means your desktop is less cluttered and the discreet receiver is almost invisible. Comfortable to use and a doddle to set up, it makes the grade as best performance but only by a short distance.



FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD

STREET PRICE £24.99
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

This wired, force-feedback version of the Firestorm wireless might not win any awards for looks, but its ergonomics are great. Decent soft grips with superbly placed buttons and a decent d-pad make precision control a breeze. Set-up couldn't be simpler and the rumble ain't bad either. A no-nonsense pad for no-nonsense gamers.



SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

STREET PRICE £12.92
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad and USB. Dead simple, dead effective and at under £13 really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear. We've used them in the office for years and we've never heard a word against them.

JOYPAD



FX5800 Ultra



MSI

MICRO-STAR INTERNATIONAL

BEST PERFORMANCE

BEST BUY

BEST BUDGET

JOYSTICK



HOTAS COUGAR
STREET PRICE £249
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk
Have we finally snapped? £249 for a joystick?

You could get a brand new GeForce 4 for that and still have enough change to go out on the razz for a couple of weeks. Ah, but the HOTAS is probably the finest flight stick in the world, complete with tome-like manual. For those that have everything this is the closest you'll get to sitting in a plane... If you're strong enough to lift it out of the box.



SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2
STREET PRICE £52.87
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

The Sidewinder Force Feedback 2 is a fine stick with perhaps the best, most refined force-feedback settings around. Performance is great overall, with the infra-red activation sensors in the handle. Its huge base will keep it planted on your desk and as long as you don't mind the extra wiring for the external power supply, it makes a great enhancement for any airborne frolics.



CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451 900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk
Saitek's current generation of sticks are

fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line, former Best Buy, USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both durable and adjustable – even the left-handed are catered for with response and accuracy both unequalled. If you're not interested in force-feedback effects (and to be honest who is these days?) this is the stick to go for.

SPEAKERS



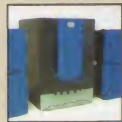
MEGAWORKS 510D
STREET PRICE £299.62
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.uk.europe.creative.com

The Megaworks 510D is the Daddy of gaming speakers – five 70W satellites and one 150W digitally amplified subwoofer together deliver 500W of power to recreate subtle sounds and devastating explosions alike. Want to know how those soldiers on Omaha Beach in *Medal Of Honour* really felt? Now's your chance. Just make sure your neighbours are away first.



PROMEDIA 4.1
STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Klipsch's Promedia 4.1 took Best Buy many months ago with their TX-I-Approval and great sound reproduction. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers to split your ears as well as the Crossfires from VideoLogic did. Whether you're a gamer or an audiophile looking for your PC to make sweet music, these are the business, as long as you can find an outlet willing to serve them up.



XPS210
STREET PRICE £40
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

Who needs surround sound? Answer: everyone who can afford it. For everyone else, this small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set-up is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue it looks the part too...

HEADPHONES



HD600
STREET PRICE £200
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk
The HD600 are Audiophile-level headphones,

and unless used with a soundcard like the Audigy Platinum/EX are total overkill for most gamers. That doesn't stop their fantastic response range from reproducing every gunshot and explosion perfectly with bass so deep and strong you'll be convinced your speakers are running too. They won't obviously – you'll have sold them to finance these.



HD497
STREET PRICE £47
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk
Replacing the HD200 Masters, which

used to occupy our Best Buy slot comes the HD497, also from Sennheiser. These new headphones have an enhanced frequency response range which might not come close to the HD600, but is still pretty damn good. Their extremely comfortable design coupled with easily replaceable parts, mean these headphones could well outlast your PC.



GAMEVOICE USB
STREET PRICE £34.07
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com

When are headphones more than just headphones? Simple – when they're the Microsoft Gamevoice USB. The Gamevoice allows you to talk to your mates online as you play clñ games with a handy control panel which lets you switch between comms channels. Adding a new dimension to your online gaming, and doubling as a decent set of headphones they're a bit of a bargain.

TFT



180MT
STREET PRICE £939
MANUFACTURER Philips
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.philips.co.uk

The 180MT from Philips is more than just a flat panel. An 18in fourth-generation screen with VGA connectivity plus inputs for Scart, S-Video and an RF tuner mean that you can ditch your telly and pipe all manner of consoles, TV and video kit through the one screen. You can even use picture-in-picture to watch the latest *Futurama* while you die repeatedly in *BF1942 Classic*.



SYNCMaster 181T
STREET PRICE £599
MANUFACTURER Samsung
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.samsung.com

What do you need to be heralded as our Best Buy in the TFT category? You need to boast top specs, which the 181T provides with a response time of 25ms, a contrast ratio of 500:1 and rated brightness of 250 cd/m². This results in a cleaner, crisper picture than our previous award-winner. A good start but the 181T is also cheaper and bigger (a whole inch diagonally) which completes the perfect package.



T1620B
STREET PRICE £522.87
MANUFACTURER Sharp
TELEPHONE 0800 262 958
WEBSITE www.sharp.co.uk

Sharp's 16in T1620B is more than £100 cheaper than the iyma and delivers all the visual goodies albeit on a smaller display area. Delivering 1280x1024 on a digital 75Hz, this screen will make your games look great while allowing you to reclaim some desktop real estate from large lumbering CRTs. If TFTs aren't quite affordable yet, this proves that the day isn't far away.

MONITOR



GDM-FW900
STREET PRICE £1,139
MANUFACTURER Sony
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.sony.co.uk

Do you remember the day when PCs used to ship with 14in screens? Pah. The gigantic 24in GDM-FW900 from Sony has to be seen to be believed. Costing almost double that of the iyma Vision Master Pro 512, you'd expect something special and that's exactly what you get. Supporting nutty resolutions such as 2304x1440 at 80Hz, you can be sure this ultra-flat screen will deliver a rock-solid picture at all times.



VISION MASTER PRO 512
STREET PRICE £527.27
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745 482
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron-screen, it has a smaller viewable area than suggested – 20in instead of 22in, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048x1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. There's also a four-port USB hub and integrated speakers which are OK for Windows, but may be tinny for games or music.



720P 17-INCH CRT
STREET PRICE £116.32
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360 400
WEBSITE www.hansol.co.uk

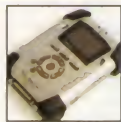
For the budget-conscious gamer Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it does 1280x1024 at an excellent 85Hz (and for those mad enough, 1600x1200 at 75Hz). Focus is tight and the picture sharp, and considering you're paying a little over £100 there's not a lot that will touch this for the money. If you've still got a 15in monitor, consider yourself rebuked.

MP3 PLAYER



APPLE IPOD
STREET PRICE £388 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 020 8210 1000
WEBSITE www.apple.com/ipod

With all of the styling of their desktop systems, the iPod caused a few dropped jaws for looks alone. Packing a 20Gb hard disk and speedy Firewire interface, the new models are finally Windows-compatible and come with excellent headphones and a tiny little inline remote control that means you don't have to keep fishing it out of your pocket to change tracks or up the volume.



ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA
STREET PRICE £330 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Archos
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.archos.com

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. Sound is fantastic but as with a lot of other players on the market, the bundled headphones are shite.



MUVO
STREET PRICE £67
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The MuVo is one of the smartest gadgets we've seen. It comes in two parts, a USB key that plugs into any system running XP (without drivers), and a battery housing. Plug it into your PC and you can back up your documents. Drag a few MP3s onto the drive and when you snap the two halves together and plug in some headphones you've got one of the smallest MP3 players on the market.





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For more Information please refer to www.msi.com.tw

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TUNNELING OUT



■ **COOLER QUEEN** Rhianna Pratchett

▲ It's a beautiful sunny day outside and all I can see is a brick wall. Actually, it's a brick shaft with its own localised atmosphere and weather conditions, so that every day looks dull and brick shaped. But I'm about to leave it all behind. I've finished digging the tunnel and by the time you read this I'll be gone with nothing but half drunk cups of tea buried under a detritus of paperwork to show that I was ever here. That's right – I'm taking a headfirst dive into the murky freelance pool. You haven't completely got rid of me just yet, as I'll still be writing for *ZONE*. Someone has to review *My First Pony Sim* after all.

I'll no doubt be snuffling into my keyboard when it finally comes to hammering out my last column next issue, but for now, welcome to my penultimate ramblings. In this month's Extended Play you can sample such delights as Wandy's Guide to making *Battlefield 1942* maps on page 122, Paul Presley feeling the Force again in *Retro Zone* on page 145 and Tony Lamb, The Modinator, rounding up the latest mods for you in *Modwatch* on page 126.

Finally, there's no man in the country, possibly the world, who knows as much about *EverQuest* as Chris Anderson, which is why he was the perfect choice to cover our Games That Changed The World on page 140 which features the infamous *EverQuest* in all its bearded glory.



The Blood Dragon ships lose parts of their hull as they get attacked.



Every city is different, but the best equipment is found on battle cruisers.



The Rheinland fleet have some of the hardest ships out there.

The Killer Elite

ON THE DVD ■ More than enough things to upload to your neural net
■ www.lancersreactor.com ■ www.microsoft.com/games/freelancer/

FREELANCER has turned out to be the mod equivalent of *GTA III* in space since its release. Well, kind of anyway. Not only has the community been busy beaver away at creating whole new star systems and galaxies to bolt on to the game's existing plethora of rogue-ridden space, but there have also been a number of gameplay mods to try and turn *Freelancer* into *Elite* reincarnated.

First up is the *Babylon 5* mod, which converts the entire *Freelancer* universe into that of the *Babylon 5* TV series, with everything from the Shadow ships to the rotating space station itself. A lot of work has gone into this, and it has produced a very accomplished mod in a short time. Fans should definitely check it out.

For those still craving a proper free-roaming *Elite* re-hash using the *Freelancer* engine, *Reynen's Mod* might just be your cup of tea. Stripping out the entire single-player campaign and unlocking all the star systems for you,

this mod also allows you to buy all ships and weapons from the word go, provided you've earned the money. This mod will change everything in your *Freelancer* game, so be sure to back up your save game and install the mod manager for *Freelancer* – also on our discs – before installing any mods.

This collection of mods will no doubt lengthen the playing time of an already epic game.

You'll also find a number of other *Freelancer* goodies on our discs, including a star map generator and a guide to the various systems in-game and how they are linked. Now kit up your ship and get freelancing...

"Reynen's Mod unlocks all the star systems and allows you to buy all ships and weapons from the word go, if you've got the cash"

CHEATS AHoy!



The old Cheat Master section of these pages may be dead, but we haven't buried it completely. Check out our cover discs where the art of cheating is still very much alive and kicking. You can find all the latest cheats for your favourite games under CheatStation in the Extended Play section of the discs.

This month we've got everything you need to cheat your way through *No One Lives Forever 2*, *Tropico 2: Pirate Cove*, *Devastation*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 2* and *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin* in Extended Play on the discs. And in case you're in any doubt, just remember: those who can, do... those who can't, cheat. It's the only way.



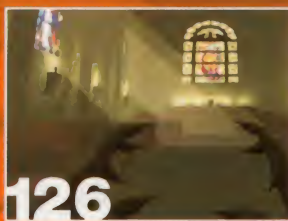
Mining is a great way to supplement your income if you're running a little low on cash and shield batteries.



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THE GUIDE

Make maps for Battlefield 1942



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THE MOD SQUAD

Get on your scooter



128

DISC PAGES

Unreal 2 and Breed exclusives



133

FIGHT CLUB

Come and have a go online

TAKING the World War II theme with a pinch of salt, *Dim Malevolence* is a *Battlefield 1942* mod set in a world where the war took place between 1884 and 1906. They might need to re-do GCSE history, but the overall premise sounds interesting as the player should get a multitude of war wagons and boomsticks to employ on the field.

In this re-imagining of World War II, the British are now on the side of Axis, combining arms with Russia and China (someone get these guys a history book, quick). America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Italy front the Allied forces. The rest of the world lies in ruins after many fierce battles, so the maps could turn out to be an entirely different kettle of fish to your standard *Battlefield 1942* fare.

Shooting with a Dim Malevolence

Battlefield 1942 establishes its place as most popular game in the mod community this month

■ www.planetbattlefield.com/dm/



Guns, guns, guns. At least *HL* has crowbars.



Aircraft can be devastating in *Blitzkrieg*.



Your mission: protect the cabinet.



Real cars, real cities. Real good fun.

Blitzkrieg Map Pack

ON THE DVD ■ www.blitzkrieg.de/

THE FIRST official map pack for *Blitzkrieg* gamers comes our way this month, and contains a total of 12 new maps on which to engage your foes. Developed by Nival Interactive, this pack should be more than enough for strategy gamers bored with the existing selection of battlegrounds in this WWII-themed RTS that we hailed as being

what *Sudden Strike 2* should have been. Also on the discs, you'll find a collection of 'mega screenshots' showing epic battles in progress across a wide area – all using the *Blitzkrieg* engine – plus the 1.1 patch, which fixes a number of gameplay issues. In all, a tidy little package, if you don't mind us saying so.

Raven Shield

ON THE DVD ■ www.raven-shield.com/

TOM CLANCY fans can rejoice as *Raven Shield* is already proving to be very popular in the mapping community. And this month we welcome a selection of the best level designs on our disc. Firstly we've got the *Zen* map for you to get your teeth into, a fast Team Deathmatch creation from Amon, one of the official

Raven Shield level designers. Not only that, but we've also got developer Red Storm's official map pack entitled *Close Quarters*. And to crown things off, as ever, you'll also find the latest patch in our Essential Patches section on the DVD, which fixes a CD Key issue and enhances graphical performance.

Real GTA III

■ www.doupal.cz/realgta/

ANYONE OUT there who might be contemplating a murderous rampage through the streets of your local city in order to re-enact the events of *GTA III* might want to think again. Courtesy of the *Real GTA* team, you can now play *GTA III* using real cars such as the Lamborghini Murcielago, the Opel Speedster and the

Porsche Carrera GT. There are also new real world buildings such as McDonalds, Internet cafes, Pizza Huts and Shell gas stations. *Real GTA III* also includes the ever-useful radar mod that we featured a couple of issues ago. If you like the sound of it, you can download *Real GTA III* at www.doupal.cz/realgta/.

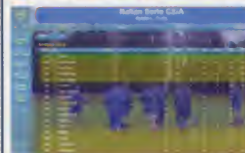
SHORTS

FALLOUT 2 EDITOR



ON THE DVD It's about time *Fallout 2* got an editor. After all, it's already had one sequel and umpteen budget re-releases, with another follow-up on the horizon. While you might not be able to match the humour from the game, you can certainly get going on some better environments, making a bit more use of colour than the brown-o-vision original.

CHAMP MAN 4 ENHANCEMENT PACK 2



ON THE DVD It was only released a couple of months ago and already *Championship Manager 4* sees its second enhancement pack as SI Games adds still more to the winning formula. This pack fixes a couple of issues in the game itself and adds some updated teams and players to the mix.

MASTER OF ORION 3



ON THE DVD With a long list of fixes already being demanded for *MoO3*, developer Quicksilver has finally got round to producing a patch for the much-maligned title. Unfortunately, it's not quite enough to sate the rabid complaining on its forums, but they have promised us the rest of the game's issues will be resolved soon.

SPLINTER CELL



ON THE DVD After its fair share of teething problems on release, *Splinter Cell* continues to improve with the release of this latest patch, which promises to address the plethora of graphical issues that gamers had on a number of systems, both with the game and the demo. While we've yet to see the official bonus maps for the game, they should appear in time for the next issue.

THE GUIDE: CREATING MAPS IN BATTLEFIELD 1942

And at 8.00pm on BBC2, *Phil Wand* presents 'Home Front In The Battlefield', with a look at giving your garden that authentic 'occupied under the jackboot of the Nazis' feel



BF1942 is like being there. Why people are still playing *Counter-Strike* we really don't know...

SECOND ONLY to *Counter-Strike* in the popularity league, Swedish stunner *Battlefield 1942* recreates World War II in high detail and high drama, and allows you to drop in and take part. Standing under a palm on one of the beaches of Guadalcanal, looking up through the haze to a mountain outpost, would lead you to believe that you were actually in the Solomon Islands. But you'd be wrong if you thought that such juicy visuals made map editing impossible. You can find a couple of these tools on our coverdisc. Others, like .NET Framework you'll get with your Windows updates. The rest can be downloaded from the URLs provided. Read and learn.

SOFTWARE CHECKLIST

With the official editor from the developers yet to appear, to tweak your own *Battlefield 1942* map you'll need to amass an armada of third-party utilities.

TIP We think you'll need about 1Gb of free space to install all the files, configure them properly, and then duplicate existing *BF1942* maps as a starting point of your own.

ON THE DVD **MADBULL'S EDITOR 1.2**

www.flashbots.co.uk/madbull Madbull's Heightmap Editor is far and away the best map tool. It has an uncluttered and familiar front end providing the framework to a very slick 3D editing interface, and in operation has proven itself to be as intuitive as the game itself. The only downside is that it requires a reasonably beefy 3D card – one that supports Hardware T&L – together with DirectX 9.0.

ON THE DVD **DIRECTX 9.0**

www.microsoft.com/windows/directx Microsoft's DirectX is the bridge between the hardware in your case and the software on your hard drive. *BF1942* requires DirectX 8.1 but we've not had a single problem after upgrading to version 9.0. You shouldn't either.

DIRECTX 9.0 FOR MANAGED CODE

www.socketman.com/MadbullTools/mdxRedist.zip Managed DirectX reduces the number of lines of code required when developing in a 3D graphical application, and

improves performance in the graphics department markedly.

.NET FRAMEWORK 1.1

msdn.microsoft.com/netframework As with DirectX, Microsoft's .NET Framework makes life easier for software developers and allows them to develop applications more rapidly than before. The downside is, you need it on your PC to run their code.

REFRACTOR2 ARCHIVE TOOL (GUI) 0.5

sourceforge.net/projects/r2at

The GUI version of the Refractor2 Archive Tool, or Rat for short, allows you to extract files from .RFA archives, the format used by the *Battlefield 1942* engine.

MAKERFA BETA 1.0.1

www.bf1942files.com/fileinfo?ID=6286 MakeRFA allows you to package your completed maps in a compressed .RFA archive that *BF1942* will be able to expand and read. It's not glamour stuff, but all needed.



Everybody screws up once in a while, usually with seriously trippy results.

BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Creating a new *BF1942* map from the ground up takes a lot of hard work. It involves rendering new textures, insanely complicated configuration files, and a great deal of trial and error – alas, such things are beyond the scope of this introductory article. Instead, our Guide has been aimed squarely at players wishing to tweak and get more from the maps already on their hard drive, and thus focuses on modifying existing levels.

What you learn here will stand you in good stead for "rolling your own", and the links boxout will point you in the right direction, but you'll have to wait for a future instalment to cover the subject in greater depth.

LET'S GET CRACKING

Your first step is to install DirectX 9.0 and Managed DirectX components, then Microsoft's .NET Framework, rebooting whenever you are prompted to do so. Once these steps have been completed, double-click the .MSI file to configure the star of the show, Madbull's Heightmap Editor.

Before you make further excited clicks, you first need to extract some of the resources from your existing *BF1942* install. To do this, browse to the folder where you installed the editor, right-click on `install_resources.bat` and choose Edit from the pop-up menu (or open the file in any text editor).

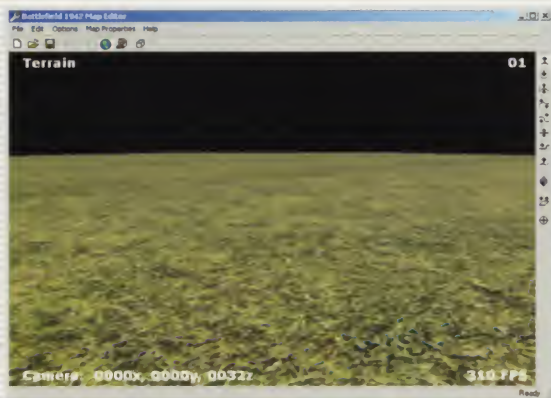
On the third line down, you'll see the following entry:

```
set BFDIR=c:\Program
Files\EA GAMES\Battlefield
1942\
```

If you have a separate area on your hard drive for games, you'll need to amend the line to point to the relevant folder. For example:

```
set BFDIR=c:\My
Games\Battlefield 1942\
```

Be sure to include the trailing backslash. After you've made this one minor alteration, close



A huge green sea greets you when you load the Map Editor.

the editor (not forgetting to save your changes as you do so) and double-click to run the file you just edited. Now sit back and take a few sips from your tea as you wait for the extraction process to complete. Once the batch file has run its course, close the DOS window and double-click the *BF1942 Map Editor* icon to familiarise yourself with Madbull's interface and the various editing tools.

TIP Don't be confused by numerous references to the term heightmap. It simply refers to the levels of terrain on your map – the contours describing every hill, dale, plain, and so on – when viewed from a first-person perspective from the landscape.

Before we move on to the actual process of creating a map, it would be wise to explain how to navigate your way around the scenery you're about to build. To move across the terrain, use the WASD or cursor keys to fly the camera around and the right-mouse button to adjust the direction in which it points. Hold space and the camera will be locked in the horizontal plane (ie it won't move up or down), hold shift and the camera will move much slower.

Using a combination of these controls you will be able to look

at any section of your map, and from any angle. By default the camera's position is shown in the lower left portion of the screen, and if you want to go to a specific point on the landscape without wasting time flying there, press CTRL+G to modify the position by entering numeric values.

LUMPS AND BUMPS

Most of you by now will have let your concentration wander, and will have experimented with the terrain deformation tools in the right-hand toolbar. So let's explore more there. With the top tool button selected, click anywhere on the map and watch the ground rise like a grassy caruncle. Click the button beneath, and the ground will fall away from the cursor.

Now click the Size Factor button, select Size 50 from the drop-down menu, then select the top button once more and click on your map. Notice how, with the Size Factor increased, a significantly larger area than before is affected. Feel free to experiment with the other terrain editing features until you're satisfied you understand what they do.

TIP The Map Editor can be a little heavy on CPU usage, so we'd advise closing down all unnecessary applications and



Your first Battlefield object! Isn't it beautiful?

backgrounds before you start editing, and don't run full screen unless you feel you really have to.

Of course, it's all very well using the ground as a sort of virtual sandpit, building lumps and bumps here and there, but what really makes a *BF1942* map is its objects. The swaying palms, the buildings, fortresses, factories and so on. So let's move on to object placement.

TERRAIN ENTITIES

To move from Terrain into Map Objects mode, click the relevant button on the main toolbar. The right-hand toolbar will change to reflect the new editing mode, allowing you to add, delete, select and modify your maps elements. These are grouped into four categories.

Static Objects refer to buildings, vegetation, fencing, barbed wire, sand bags and all the objects players are unable to move when in the game. Spawn



Our test map, with the addition of a second, rotated house object.

Objects refer to places on the map where objects appear at given intervals to replace ones that have been lost in battle – new vehicles and planes, for example. Soldier spawns are locations where new players join or respawn after dying, and lastly, Control Points denote flags.

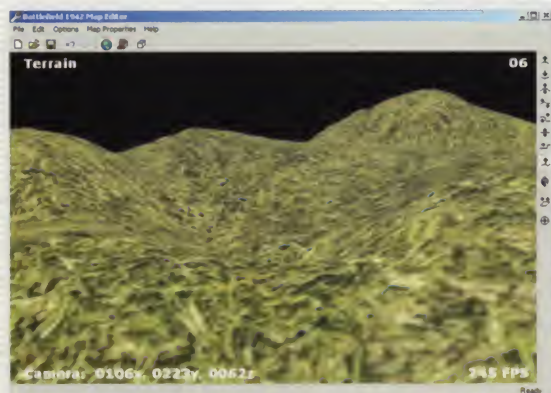
By now you may have noticed that the pop-up list of

Spawn objects, Soldier spawns and Control points in the Map Editor is empty. On a new, empty map that's to be expected – don't worry about it. For now we'll concentrate on adding a few buildings to the test map.

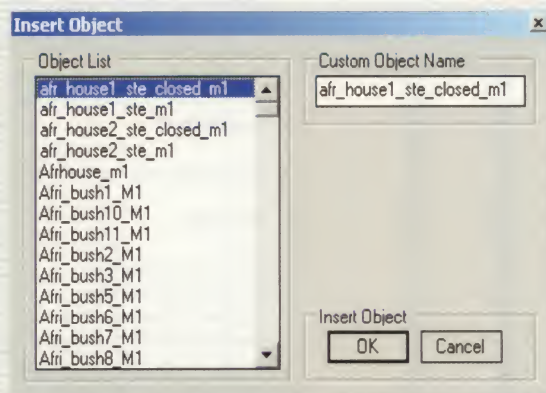
Choose Static Objects then Click the Add Object button. Click anywhere on the map and a pop-up dialog appears, asking you to select one of the available objects.

Select the *afr_house1_ste_m1* entry near the top of the list and press OK. Hey presto, one house. Use the controls to fly in to get a closer look.

Let's duplicate this object and make two houses, one next to the other. Click the Clone Object button on the toolbar and click on the house you just added. Now, just click anywhere else on the map – an exact copy will appear. To move either of your houses, click the Select Object tool, click one of them, then select the Move Object tool and drag it around the map. You can



The more you fiddle, the more it looks real when it comes to scenery – nature is rarely orderly.



Everything you could possibly want, from barbed wire to African bushes.

select multiple objects by holding down the CTRL key when clicking.

Right now we'll rotate one of the buildings slightly, as otherwise our little village will start to look like a Barratt housing estate. As mentioned previously, the key to getting a map that looks and plays realistically is to avoid putting objects in lines, or making the terrain uniform. So with one of your huts selected, click the Rotate Object tool and drag the mouse.

Now that you've got to grips with the editor, it's time to move on to something a lot more exciting – editing an existing *Battlefield* map.

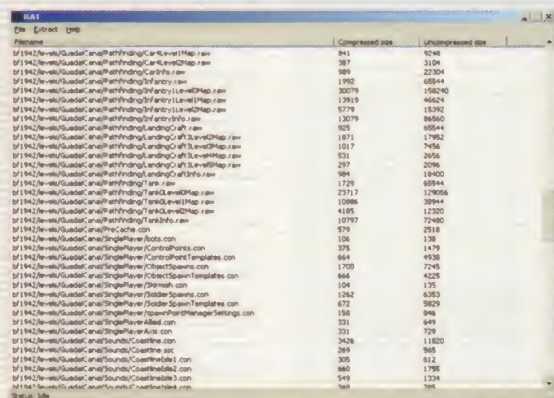
A NEW GUADALCANAL

This is where things get a little more tricky. What we're going to do is choose an existing map – Guadalcanal, as it's our favourite – extract all the information we need from its .RFA file, and then edit it in the editor. To do this, we need to call on the services of RAT, the Refractor2 Archive Tool.

First though, let's make ourselves a copy of Guadalcanal. Browse to the folder where your copy of *BF1942* is installed, and drill down to:



RootCanal, as first shown in the editor. Don't panic, the island is a little to north.



All these files pack together to make the Guadalcanal map.



Version 1.2 of the editor won't yet render objects such as trees, although their shadows remain visible.

Mods\bf1942\Archives\
bf1942\levels

until you can see the Guadalcanal.rfa. Copy this file to a new folder in the root of the drive, for example:

C:\BFmaps\GuadalCanal.rfa

Now, extract rat.exe from the zip file to a directory of your choice, and double-click on it. Choose File, then Open, and select the Guadalcanal.rfa file. Click Extract from the main menu, then Extract All, and browse to the BFmaps folder you created. Click OK and wait for the process to complete.

Now what we're going to do is rename the map. First, browse to the following folder:

C:\BFmaps\bf1942\levels\

Rename the Guadalcanal directory to RootCanal (if you want to use a different name, you can, but any spaces in it should be replaced with underscores). Open that folder and edit the Init.con file within it. Open your text editor's Replace dialog, and perform a non-case-sensitive search for all instances of the existing map name:

guadalcanal

Replacing it with the new one:

rootcanal

Once you've done this, browse to the Init folder and open Terrain.con. Run the above search and replace again. You should have changed one instance in the first file, and four in the second. Close the editor.

TIP A decent text editor that can open more than one file at once is always a boon in these situations. We use *UltraEdit*, available as shareware from www.ultraedit.com.

A QUICK FLYOVER

Return to Madbull's editor and choose Open from the File menu. Browse to the following file:

C:\BFmaps\bf1942\levels\Root
Canal\HeightMap.raw

Press OK to load it. After some time, you should be presented with a screen showing water.

Hold down the W key to cruise over the sea up towards the main island. Once the land is in view, have a zoom about and familiarise yourself with the area.

TIP Hold the space bar to lock movement into the horizontal plane.



Selecting multiple objects shows multiple information entries.



Our RootCanal map, with the big bomber squatting at the end of the Japanese runway.

the ObjectSpawns.con file in the directory relating to the type of game you're making – Conquest, CTF, single-player or TDM and add new information to it.

Let's give our RootCanal map a new spawn point for a heavy bomber. Go to the end of the runway in the Japanese base, select Add Object from the right toolbar, click on the ground and select HeavyBomberSpawner from the dialog.

TIP Remember to rotate objects such as planes so they are facing the right way down the runway, or else nobody will be able to use them without spending 10 minutes trying to do a three-point turn. By which point they'll have been shot to bits.

Save the map in the editor – feel free to experiment with some ground alterations before you do

so – by clicking the disk icon on the main menu. Then, open up ObjectSpawns.con from the following folder:

C:\BFmaps\bf1942\levels\RootCanal\Conquest

Find the section of the file that relates to the object you added (look for references to its name, position and rotation). For our bomber, the information is easy to find as the map editor appended it to the file at the end:

**HeavyBomberSpawner
Object.create
HeavyBomberSpawner
Object.absolutePosition
2488/91.2/1112
Object.rotation -48/0/0**

Now we need to supply the object's affiliation, so add the following two lines to the code:

**Object.setTeam 1
Object.setOSId 7**

Object.setTeam denotes the team: 0 is neutral, 1 is axis, 2 is allies. Object.setOSId is an ID number, normally used for identifying control points. Close the editor, remembering to save the file as you do so. **TIP Forget to add these two lines to ObjectSpawns.con and your new objects simply won't show up.**

SUCK IT AND SEE

The final stage in editing is to stuff the file structure back into a Refractor2 archive. To do this, copy the MakeRFA.exe tool into:

C:\BFmaps

Open an MS-DOS window by clicking Start, then Run, then typing "cmd" in the box (users of 95, 98 and Me should type "command" instead). At the prompt, type MakeRFA. When prompted for the root directory, enter bf1942, and bf1942 again for the base .rfa path. If you'd like to see a list of directories displayed choose Y at the next prompt, but since we know the structure there's little point. For the name of the new .RFA type RootCanal.rfa. Compressing the archive makes it around 35 per cent smaller, but it takes a considerable length of time doing so. Until you're ready to release, choose N. Once the new Refractor2 archive has been

completed, copy it back to your game directory, alongside the other .RFA files. For example:

**C:\Games\Battlefield
1942\Mods\bf1942\Archives
\bf1942\levels**



Terragen, available free from www.planetside.co.uk/terrigen, is a great starting place for heightmaps.



The green square denotes a Japanese bomber spawn point.

Now run the game. So there you have it, the world of Battlefield 1942 is now your oyster!

GRADE 'A' BF POINTERS

The web is full of useful links on the subject of rolling your own Battlefield 1942 maps. Here we present a very condensed list of links that you should find useful.

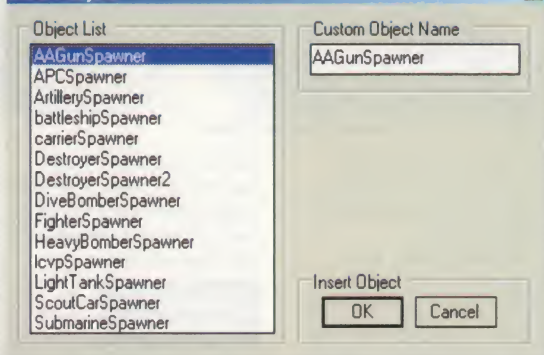
www.battlefield1942.co.uk – A pint and a half of Battlefield 1942 goodness with a UK slant.

www.vhavoc.com – A superb tutorial on using Terragen to create textures and terrains. Look out for it in the Tutorials section.

www.bf42.com – This site contains everything you need to know about Battlefield 1942 editing, plus a comprehensive download area and forums.

www.planetbattlefield.com – On this site you'll find a number of great tutorials in the Tweakin' section. It also features some very useful editing files also. rex3d.com/bf – This is where you'll find Rexman's editing site for the more hard-core mappers and 3D Max users among you.

Insert Object



The object list is now well populated.

THE MODSQUAD

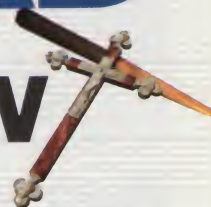
Tony Lamb guides his flock to more masterful mods...

VAMPIRE SLAYER CHAPTER V



SIZE 71Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of *Half-Life*
www.planethalflife.com/vampire

**TOTAL
CONVERSION**



Vampire Slayer is one of the spookiest mods around.

THE VAMPIRE

legend was around in Eastern Europe for a long time before Bram Stoker popularised it, but there's still enough of a chill in the story to send a shiver down most people's spines.

Capitalising on our natural desire not to be bitten by people with long pointy teeth, *Vampire Slayer* is a great mod

with a skillful blend of fun and fear that will keep you going back for more. As the name suggests, it's a battle between the fiendish undead and the forces of good as each struggles to wipe out the other in a variety of well-designed maps. It's Team Deathmatch for Hammer Horror film lovers, and it's pretty damned spooky too.

At the beginning of each game you get to choose whether to be a vampire or a slayer. Slayers can select from the Molly, Eightball or Father D class categories, (although each has pretty much the same capabilities), while prospective vampires have more limited options – the half-starved, lanky and toothsome look is common to all. What is most interesting is that while the humans have weapons – guns to knock down the vamps and wooden stakes to finish 'em off

(which has to be done before they can get back up again), the bloodsuckers have to rely on guile, good use of the shadows and a very effective leaping ability to get their dinner. This might seem uneven, but the vampires can move quickly, and a well-timed leap not only dodges bullets but can often help the bloodsucker land right on its victim, making a quick nip to the jugular almost assured.

We've looked at *Vampire Slayer* before – it's now two years old, no less – and it has never ceased to impress with its chillingly atmospheric maps, tongue-in-cheek humour, neat skins and a fun factor that's up there with the best. Altogether, we reckon this mod is a must-have. It's original, well supported online, and has bots for offline play too. Class.

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **91**
Bloody brilliant

DESERT CRISIS 1.5



SIZE 131Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of *Half-Life*
www.desertcrisis.com

**TOTAL
CONVERSION**

NOW REACHING

version 1.5, *Desert Crisis* is a top-class mod for *Half-Life* that mixes futuristic weapons with those of the modern-day, as well as offering a modular objective system and skin customisation options, allowing you to create a collection of skins that a snake would be proud of.

You can tweak many facets of your appearance and clothing, as well as weapon load-outs and certain physical abilities like improved agility, stealth, night-vision and more. This means that not only is it easy to recognise enemy players, but you even get to look in their eyes before blowing their heads off. Quite charming really.

The year is 2053, a few years after a Pakistan/India nuclear exchange, when all of Europe and some other countries have



Desert Crisis is a very enjoyable mod.

merged to become the United Peace Keeping Organisation (well, anything can happen in a mod), fusion power has become commonplace, and the Germans have invented anti-

gravity technology (though even that doesn't put a smile on their faces). This leaves only the USA/Canada alliance and the 'Scourge of the Desert' freedom fighters to complete



Skins can be customised to your liking.

the triumvirate battling for world domination. Naturally, you join the game, pick a side and get fragging.

Boasting familiar Team Deathmatch and Last Team Standing game modes, a range of player classes with the usual armour/health/ability variations, an extensive mix of twentieth

century firepower, futuristic blasters, some very nasty melee weapons, and some very neat maps, *Desert Crisis* is brimming with features. Great stuff.

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **90**
Crisis, what crisis?

DESERT COMBAT 0.3

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 147Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of Battlefield 1942
www.desertcombat.com

RAPIDLY establishing itself as the mod for *BF1942*, *Desert Combat* is an absolute must-have that's proving almost as popular as *TFC* and even *Counter-Strike* did for *Half-Life*. With online players in the thousands, and downloads running as fast as the various mirrors can handle, the take-up of this mod has been phenomenal.

DC replaces the world of 1942 with that of 2003. In place of Sherman and Tiger tanks,

players can slug it out in M1 Abrams and T72's. In the air the Spitfires and Messerschmitts are replaced by Migs, F16s and A10s. Player skins and weapons are updated too. It is, of course, a representation of the recent 'war' in the gulf, although it must be said that the various weapons are rather more evenly matched – it's pretty gutting to be sitting in an Abrams and get taken out by an Iraqi T72, for example.

New in version 0.3 are the UH-60 Blackhawk and Mi24



TOTAL CONVERSION

Hind helicopters, the terrifying AC130 gunship (basically a converted Hercules bristling with firepower), Av8b Harrier, Su25 jet, SCUD launchers and lots more. Which all adds up to make an already brilliant mod even better.

PCZONE VERDICT 90

Damn we love this mod



American firepower. Safest in front of you...



UnrealSpeed shows definite promise.

UNREALSPEED 1.30 + 1.35 PATCH

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 31Mb + 1.6Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of UT2003
www.planetunreal.com/unrealspeed

UNREALSPEED is a driving game for *UT2003*. The premise is simple – the first guy to the finishing line wins – but simple driving skill isn't all you'll need because you can add a variety of weapons to your car and use them to take out other players. Rest assured, they'll be trying to do the same to you too.

There are a few driving mods around, but so far they haven't really managed to get it quite right. It's usually the vehicle physics that cause problems, hopefully the sheer power and capabilities of the *UT2003* engine will make it all a lot easier.

So far,

UnrealSpeed is showing a lot of promise, and although these early models are a bit low in detail and derived from the Tonka toy design studio, there's a lot of fun to be had as you zip around the maps and use your totally over-the-top weaponry to reduce the other players to smoking wreckage (although the bots' incredibly poor driving skills means they're quite capable of doing that on their own). Fun, but needs work.

PCZONE VERDICT 68

Blasted learner drivers



HARDCORE-LIFE BETA 0.40

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 21Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of Half-Life
www.planethalf-life.com/hcl

HARDCORE-LIFE harks back to the early days of *Half-Life* mods, when the skins, environments and gameplay were recognisably *HL*-derived, and before everyone decided to get clever and create the likes of *Counter-Strike*, *TFC* and *Day Of Defeat*. This is by no means a criticism, however, because as the name suggests, *Hardcore-Life* is about as in-ye-face a mod as you can find, with frag-fest levels that are more like a *Quake* Deathmatch. It's absolutely intense, and as big an adrenaline rush as you can get, which is no bad thing in the current stealth-dominated gaming environment. The maps are varied and different tactics

are needed in each one. Some promote close-quarters scrapping, while others provide opportunities for long-range blood letting. Weapons are varied and range from the up-close katana for disembowelling enemies, to the mini-nuke for those moments when only complete vapourisation will do.

Unusually for a *Half-Life* mod, this one has bot support, and this is very welcome because while a few servers exist online, this mod is really best played on a LAN, or against the bots.

PCZONE VERDICT 72

Good clean fun



TOTAL CONVERSION

Hardcore-Life is akin to a frenzied bout of *Quake*.

DISC PAGES

■ **WORDS** Dave Woods, Mark Eveleigh and Rhianna Pratchett

■ **DISCS** Mark Eveleigh

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on **08700 711 482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk **BEFORE YOU DIAL...** If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

■ You need at least a PIII 600MHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 2MX 32Mb graphics card and 128Mb RAM (256Mb recommended for Windows XP users) to run the software on these discs.

DISCLAIMER

■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.

■ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

CD1/DVD Pub: Infogrames **Developer:** Legend Entertainment **Reviewed:** Issue 126 (94%)

EXCLUSIVE



Unreal II is probably the most gorgeous game to ever grace the Earth.

It's taken a long time for first-person shooters to take anything more than baby steps in attempting to advance their genre, until Legend Entertainment came up with *Unreal II: The Awakening* that is. As is usual with a massively hyped game, not all of you agreed – in fact, there was a huge backlash against *Unreal II*. Justified? This is your chance to see for yourself in our exclusive playable demo this month.

The demo contains the first level of the game where you play ex-marine John Dalton who's sent in on an *Aliens*-style mission to investigate why there has been a communications breakdown with a small mining facility. Of course you just know that nearly everyone will be dead and the whole place is going to be overrun with vicious aliens, but let's pretend it's going to come as a complete surprise.

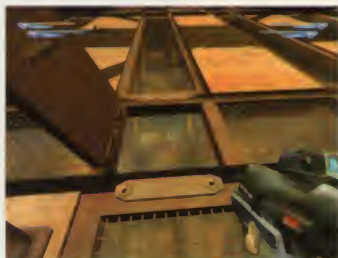
Once you land on the planet and wade through the corpses, you'll be glad you brought the big gun as there are more than enough gibbering beasts around. You'll play with a variety of weaponry, including grenade launchers and alien shock lances as well as sampling the atmospheric beauty in the *Unreal II* levels.

WALKTHROUGH →

THE DEMO MISSION IS UNREALLY HARD – HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS...



1 At the start, walk through the door in front of you and down the steps, picking up the grenades on the way. Go to the end of the corridor and take a right, another right and a left until you come to a room with about six monsters. Give 'em hell.



2 The technician controlling the camera will open a trapdoor for you. Drop through it and take a swim around, picking up the weapons and ammo you'll find down there until you come across a tunnel to your left. Follow it all the way along.



3 Climb up the steps and through the door to the grassy open area and take down another load of aliens (make sure you pick up their shock lances). Continue through and start climbing the ladder. Watch out for the aliens shooting from above.



4 Pick up the grenades, grenade launcher and health pack at the top of the ladder. Continue through the door and take out the aliens in the corridor. Don't hit the canisters or you'll be toast and heed the warnings of your new friend.



Your faithful dropship the USC Darwin.

BREED

CD 1/DVD Pub: CDV Dev: Brat Designs

Beautiful, seamless first-person action is at your fingertips in our second exclusive demo this month. We've been following *Breed* for quite a while now and at last you can pass judgment yourself on what we think is going to be one of the most impressive FPSs of the year.

The demo contains a tutorial mission where you'll be babysat by a gruff commander in a kind of *Tron*-style virtual environment. This is where you'll be taught how to use waypoints, weaponry and the art of taking down the Breed (they're the aliens in case you weren't sure). After that you'll get a chance to try out the skills you've learnt on a live mission, which you can play on three difficulty settings. You'll take command of a four-person squad made up of two

grunts, a heavy gunner and a sniper who are on a mission to infiltrate a Breed outpost to retrieve some tactical data.

You'll find it easy to swap between squad members and switch weaponry as you traverse through the island-based level picking off Breed soldiers and artillery on the way to the base. As well as regular weaponry, you'll also get to use an übergun, which is the onboard gun on your drop-ship the USC Darwin, and take-over some of the Breed's mounted laser guns.



Your HUD manages to be useful rather than intrusive.

Meet Miss Sniper, your new best friend

WALKTHROUGH

WE SHOW YOU HOW TO GET STARTED ON THE FIRST PART OF THE BREED DEMO



1 Your first objective is to take down the radars that form part of the Breed's early warning system. Press F to take over the übergun, and as the drop-ship circles the island you should be able to destroy all of the radars. If you don't, the Breed will know you're coming.



2 Once you land you can take control of any of your squad members. For this mission the sniper is a particularly good choice as she can swap between her sniper and assault rifles fast and you'll need to pick off many of the Breed from a distance.



3 Keep an eye on your minimap as this will give you a clearer idea of enemy positions and those of your squad mates, who will also alert you if they see any Breed. Take out as many of the Breed soldiers as you can with the sniper. You can also use the Breed's mounted gun.



4 You'll need to take out the artillery guns on the top of the hill otherwise they'll rain mortars down on you, so use your sniper rifle carefully. Remember you can instruct your squad using the F keys. Orders are highlighted in the top right-hand corner of your screen.

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

CD2/DVD Pub: Activision Dev: The Collective Reviewed: Issue 129 (63%)



Indy can edge his way around difficult drops.

Indiana Jones was raiding tombs when Lara Croft was in nappies and although the whip-toting one has had quite a long absence from the gaming scene, he's finally made a return and swings on to our cover discs this month. In this demo you'll get to play as the good doctor in *The Hunter's Camp* mission, where you have to find a way through the flooded Ceylon ruins, while avoiding the nearby ivory hunters.

As usual you'll have your trusty whip, which can be used to swing over gaps and avoid dodgy paving slabs. You'll also get a pistol and a shotgun, plus a machete, which is more effective than your fists and is essential for cutting down vines. There are various sneaky ways to get rid of the hunters without having to resort to hand to hand combat such as dropping a big wooden case on their heads, which is guaranteed to put a crimp in anyone's day. Don't forget to take a swig from your water canteen now and again to restore your health.



This gameplay is very 3D platform orientated.

DAY OF DEFEAT 1.0

EXCLUSIVE

CD 2/DVD Pub: VU Games

Dev: Valve Software Reviewed: Issue 130 (84%)



ONLINE ONLY

Could *Day Of Defeat* be the new *Counter-Strike*?

Day Of Defeat is the latest online mod to bag itself a retail release as well, but why shell out your hard-earned cash when you can get it exclusively on our discs for free? *DoD*, like *Enemy Territory*, takes place in the middle of European operations during World War II and

features different classes of soldiers, including infantrymen, machine gunners and scouts, giving players uniquely different roles. As well as period weaponry and items you can also fight your way through historically accurate scenarios from the battlefields of WWII.

TROPICO 2

CD 1/DVD Pub: Take 2 Dev: Frog City Reviewed: Issue 129 (78%)

If you didn't get a chance to try out the last *Tropico 2: Pirate Cove* demo then do yourself a favour and install this new updated version. Even if you played the first one, you'll find this latest demo has two missions, instead of one, for the budding pirate king. In the first one, entitled *Captain's Mansion*, you have to raise \$4,000 by sending your pirates out on successful cruises and by dragging their hard won earnings out of their

hands via your economy of wenchies, beer and gambling.

Two Captains, One Ship, is the title of the second mission, the aim here is to construct a shipyard and then build another schooner for your spare captain. In the meantime, you'll have to send your other ship out into battle to bring in some income and captives. If you're lucky you might bag yourself a wealthy prisoner who you can ransom off for a tidy sum.



EXCLUSIVE

Create a thriving pirate economy in *Tropico 2*.

WILL ROCK

CD1/DVD Pub: Ubi Soft Dev: Saber Interactive

Another rugged American archeologist hits our discs this month, although Will Rock isn't your average guy, he's half mortal, half Titan. Imbued with the spirit of Prometheus (who according to Greek mythology stole fire from the gods to give to mortals and was punished by Zeus by having his regenerating liver pecked out daily by an eagle) Will marches off to take on the ancient Olympian armies in order to seek revenge.

This is both a single and multiplayer demo and takes place in the Tholos Temple level where you'll get to charge about *Serious Sam*-style with a variety of fairly-standard weaponry such as shotguns and pistols, you'll also get to use some more novel weapons like the flaming crossbow. But as you're taking on the very forces of Zeus himself, you'll definitely need all the help you can get.



Eat flaming ball demon!

OTHER DEMOS ON THE CD/DVD

LASER SQUAD NEMESIS, AIRSTRIKE 3D: OPERATION W.A.T, RED SHARK, ROSSO RABBIT IN TROUBLE, WWII: FRONTLINE COMMAND AND ORBZ V2.0

DVD EXCLUSIVES

ONLY AVAILABLE ON PC ZONE'S DVD EDITION. TO SUBSCRIBE TURN TO PAGE 132

DVD DEMO

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

MULTIPLAYER



Although playing the nubile '60s super-spy Cate Archer made for a better single-player game than anything else in *No One Lives Forever 2* a lot of work has gone into tweaking the multiplayer side of the game to allow it to compete with the best out there. This is a particularly good-value multiplayer demo as it features three maps from the full game and four different modes of play: deathmatch, co-op, team deathmatch and doomsday. You'll also find the single-player demo in our essential demos section this month.

OTHER DEMOS ON THE DVD

X PLANE 6, STAR WRAITH 3, LASER SQUAD NEMESIS AND UPLINK

ESSENTIAL DEMOS

Splinter Cell
Championship Manager 4
Unreal Tournament 2003
No One Lives Forever 2
Vietcong
Praetorians
Rollercoaster Tycoon 2

PATCHES

Age Of Mythology v1.05
Bandits: Phoenix Rising v1.1
Champ Man 4 Enhancement Pack

Delta Force: Black Hawk Down Update
Divine Divinity English Patch
Hearts Of Iron v1.04
Indiana Jones & The Emperor's Tomb V1.0
Master Of Orion III Data Patch
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance v1
Post Mortem Patch 1
Praetorians v1.04
Purge v1.4.4.
Restaurant Empire v1.14
Raven Shield v1.1 UK Patch
SimCity 4 Patch 2
Splinter Cell v1.2

DVD VIDEO EXCLUSIVES

SPACE COLONY



In the first of our three exclusive DVD videos you can get to see the upcoming work of *Stronghold* developer Firefly Studios, with its new sim building game *Space Colony*.

The footage shows you several of the characters in the game, some of the aliens you'll have to deal with and how the different building features work.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2



If you're a fan of the original *Hidden & Dangerous* then you'll want to take a peak at what developer Illusion Softworks has in store for you in the sequel with our second exclusive DVD video. Load it up and you'll be able to see the squads of soldiers in action in a variety of different locations, including jungles, snowscapes and deserts.

RAILROAD TYCOON 3



If all you really want this year is an absorbing 3D train simulator then *Railroad Tycoon 3* may be just the ticket. If you need any more convincing then take a look at our last DVD video, which shows you lots of lovely little chuffing trains streaming through countryside and an invisible hand creating a dream virtual model railway.

Unreal Tournament 2003 v2225
Virtual Pool 3 v3099

MODWATCH

Vampire Slayer Chapter V
Desert Crisis 1.5
Desert Cimat 0.3
Hardcore Life 0.40
Unreal Speed 1.3

MOVIES

Breed
The Hulk

Metal Arms

Enter The Matrix TV Commercial
Tron 2.0
Republic: The Revolution
Lineage II
Korea: Forgotten Conflict
Day Of Defeat
Cold War
Chaser

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1 DEUS EX

Arguably the best PC game ever, scoring a massive 94% in PCZONE, Deus Ex is an RPG of complex beauty. The twisting sci-fi plot and unparalleled player freedom are two of the reasons why this is a true classic.



2 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

Still PCZONE's benchmark rally title, with a massive 85% rating, simply because there's no other game that comes close to replicating the experience. With amazing visuals and cars that handle superbly, this is a must for car-nuts.



3 GROUND CONTROL

Still considered an essential purchase (87%, PCZONE March 2003), Ground Control is a stunning real-time strategy game that gets everything right. Go in all-guns blazing, right from the start.



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FIGHT CLUB

First rule: you do not talk about fight club. Second rule: if you do, do it here.
Martin Korda files his report from the frontlines of the PC ZONE Free-For-All



Come and face us online on Thursday, June 26.

MAY 1, 2003. Another Thursday night bloodbath unfolded in the cauldron of combat that is the PC ZONE monthly Free-For-All. It's a place where reputations are made and lost, and the greatest warriors become immortalised on these

very pages by attaining a mighty five Star Player of The Month awards.

This month, the best of the best were few and far between, with only five gallant gunmen gaining the required kill-scores to be mentioned. And who were they?

Well, this month the exalted few were (TNC) Morph, P.J., -wka=-Devils B and two of our current Hall of Famers, K.I.T and logix. Well done to one and all, and see you once again on the killing fields on June 26.

FREE-FOR-ALL

**THURSDAY
JUNE 26**

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Counter-Strike

HALL OF FAME

Earn five mentions and you'll have your name immortalised. Our three star players so far are...

**K.I.T
logix
Mas.ter**

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Lee Cocker	Viper
Phil Clark	ShitKicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.
Jamie Malcolm	BraveArt

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

Connecting to our server has always been simple. And to make things even easier, we've given it a permanent home. To hook up from within the game, open the *Half-Life* console and type 'password pczone' and then press enter. After this, type 'connect pczone2.jolt.co.uk' and press enter. You'll be taken right there. You can also add the server to popular game browsers such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy 3D by entering *pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27015* where you would normally provide an IP address. Check our forum (www.pczone.co.uk) for any information updates.

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS POWERED BY JOLT.CO.UK

OUR SERVERS ARE OPEN 24/7 AND FREE OF CHARGE. WHY PLAY ANYWHERE ELSE?

We've switched our game servers to the ultra-fast Jolt service, which means lag should now be a thing of the past. We've also changed the way you find them, and from now on, we'll refer to them by their name rather than by their address. The easiest way to connect is to load the game you wish

PC Zone Game Servers Powered By Jolt.co.uk

PC Zone CS #1 [Popular] – pczone.jolt.co.uk:27015

PC Zone CS #2 [Dusty] – pczone.jolt.co.uk:27025

PC Zone CS #3 [Custom] – pczone.jolt.co.uk:27035

Team Fortress Classic Public Server [24hr 2fort]:
pczone.jolt.co.uk:27045

Natural Selection [1.04]: pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27025

to play, go to the multiplayer connection screen, and instead of typing in an IP address, enter the name of the server from the list below. They can also be accessed from a server browser such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy. Remember to use the password below, which is updated each month.

PC Zone Q3 [OSP] – pczone.jolt.co.uk:27960

PC Zone BF1942 [CTF] – pczone2.jolt.co.uk:14567

PC Zone UT2003 [Team] – pczone2.jolt.co.uk:7777

PC Zone RTCW [1.4] – pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27960

FreeForAll Server – pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27015

PASSWORD: bouncer

LAN ROVER

LAN LORD STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL KNOWS WHERE THE PARTY'S AT

Lots of events to talk about this month, so much so that I can't even mention my own www.gglan.co.uk event. Oops.

■ www.clanlan.net are going to hold five events this year. With the first two gone, you won't want to miss out on the June 27-29 LAN. It's being held in the regular venue at TS Scimitar in St Helens, Merseyside. With ten pubs, three offies, five Indians, three Chinese, two chippies, two kebab shops and a supermarket within 300 metres, you may just want to leave your PC at home. They can cater

for more than 50, and usually get around 30. At just £12 it's a three-day bargain which deserves to fill to capacity.

■ www.multiplay.co.uk are holding *Insomnia 16* from 27-29 June at Newbury Racecourse. There are 600 initial spaces but this can be expanded. It costs £60 for the three days or £5 per day for a spectator. They also offer monitor rental so you can get a train to the event.

■ www.triggerhappylans.co.uk have a two-day event starting May 31 in the Bulwark Community Centre in Chepstow

with up to 40 slots to fill, a full buffet included in the £15 entry charge, and all profits going to charity.

■ www.abenet.co.uk, Glasgow 14-16 June, costs £15 and also offers monitor hire. 25 spaces at this event.

■ *Lympian 10* will be held in Exeter, Devon on June 27-29, costing £12 for the full attendance. See www.westlan.co.uk.

■ There is also a one-day event going on if you can't spend a weekend away. It's in North Wales on June 22 and costs £10 more information at www.flintfrag.co.uk.



MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ KEEPING IT REAL Dave Woods



UNNOVATIONS

After reading the 'Time To Move On' letter in last month's mag I had to write in. I've been playing computer games for about 20 years and I believe we're in desperate need of innovation or the PC market is going to consist of nothing but racks of third-rate FPS and strategy games. I can't help thinking developers are missing out in areas that could seriously push the boundaries of gaming. What about a game that makes you use the Internet in real-time to solve clues?

I don't have all the answers and I don't think that the FPS genre is dead – just looking at the likes of *Doom 3* is enough to convince me that there's life in the shooter – but I think people should look out of the box a bit more.

Neil Stokes

The problem with real innovation is that it costs a lot of money and without a ready-made mass market not many companies are willing to plough their profits into something so risky. EA was developing a game called *Majestic* that involved clues on the Internet, mobiles going off in the middle of the night and strange ladies screaming down the phone at you and a twisting plot that was going to provide something completely different. Unfortunately no one was interested and it was canned at a huge cost.

KEEP IT LIGHT

So, I'm a sad spotter and a pedant, but Jamie Sefton really should know better after all the shooters he's played. In the preview of *Day Of Defeat* (#129) he refers to the Bren gun being fired as a heavy machine gun. It is, of course, a light machine gun. A heavy would be something like a Lewis or Browning .50 inch. You chaps could do with a part time military advisor. I'm open to offers. Otherwise, no complaints, as ever. This issue was my personal 100th.

Tim Bromige

A sad spotter and a pedant? It's a dirty job but someone's got to do it.

PLAYTIME

Is it just me or are games just too damn easy? I'm 14 and during my Easter holidays I decided to play some of the games I hadn't had time to start. *Freelancer* was great while it lasted but it was over in 16 hours. Then I bought *Postal 2* and within a day I



Is NVIDIA trying to take over the world?

was watching the credits roll by. So, a message to developers: make your games harder so I don't waste £25 on a game that's over before it's started.

Andy

It's a debate that goes both ways. If you haven't got that much time on your hands 16 hours to complete a game isn't far off the mark. If you really want a challenge get yourself into *Morrowind*. You'll still be playing it on your deathbed.

MONOPOLY

Am I the only one who has very mixed feelings about reports in your magazine and on the net that NVIDIA's courting companies with a view to getting some sort of exclusivity for its graphics cards. As I understand it this exclusivity may range from a fairly mild: games will be guaranteed to run on NVIDIA

cards, through to a slightly stronger, games will have enhanced features on NVIDIA hardware, to an extreme rumour that games will only run on NVIDIA hardware.

I own several NVIDIA cards and I've always thought of them as the good guys – giving gamers quality products at a good price, but exclusive deals smack of a company trying to establish some sort of monopoly, something which never benefits the consumer.

The only possible good point here is that it might mean we finally get games that actually use the fancy features which are always talked about in regards to the new graphics cards.

Kevin Gaughan

BITTER AND TWISTED

I bet this is one letter you won't print, but I just wanted to say thanks for your side-splitting



Majestic was going to innovate but the public wasn't ready.

GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

WIN!
A TOP
SOUND
CARD

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new soundcard courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Audigy 2 Platinum has been firmly ensconced in our Buyer's Guide since its release, and is the best gaming card you can currently buy.



How long do you want your games to last?

BACKCHAT

"I may well be your oldest reader at 47 but I'm still itching to get hold of your magazine every month"

SB, HE MAY BE OLDER BUT HE'S STILL GOT TASTE



Championship Manager is still the definitive footy management game.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

BETTER THAN SEX

I read with interest and amusement your feature on games addiction, but as with all addictive tendencies it isn't just the user who's affected, so I thought there should also be some quiz questions for partners of gamers to answer in order to get the 'family perspective'.

1. Does your partner grab the new edition of *PC ZONE* with sweaty hands and a manic grin and disappear for hours?
2. Does your partner know exactly when *PC ZONE* is late arriving but has no idea when the direct debit for the mortgage is due?
3. Does your sex life take a rest when *PC ZONE* arrives?

I'm sure other gaming partners could add many more – these are just the foundation.

Helen Walters

review of our game *Player Manager 2003*, it had us rolling in the aisles. Your comic really does know how to review a game with style. We apologise for not stumping up enough money to get a decent review but that is not our policy. I won't even begin to touch upon the points you raised in the review as your reviewer is still probably examining the contents of his own bowels. Never mind, rest assured my subscription to your fine publication will remain intact in the knowledge that the Andrex shortage I once predicted will bite soon.

Steve Screech (your biggest fan)

Cheers Steve, and we're very glad that through the misery of producing what we consider to be one of the worst games in the history of the world, you can still smile through the pain. Copies of *Championship Manager 4*, *Total Club Manager 2003*, and every other footy management game ever developed are in the post for future reference.

WHAY AYE MAN!

Did you know that the actor Simon Greenall, who plays Michael the Geordie in the Alan

Partridge comedy series, is the same guy who did the European voices for *Shogun: Total War*? Does this mean that Creative Assembly is working on 'Tyneside: Total War'?

Gavin Hay

FRUSTRATION

I may well be your oldest reader at 47 but I'm still itching to get hold of your mag every month. The trouble is, I'm invariably forced to buy your CD version because the DVD version is not on the shelves. This seems to happen wherever I go, be it WH Smiths or obscure fag and paper outlets. Why is this? Needless to say my frustration is increased to a point of apoplexy when on opening the mag I'm teased by the delights that are not available to me on my two CDs. Other than this the mag is great – I particularly like the semi anachronistic humour. Bring back OZ and the Furry Freaks!!

SB

We're pumping out a lot of copies of the DVD issue and as more of you are upgrading we'll be upping the number to match. The only other solution is to subscribe – that way we'll guarantee delivery of 13 DVDs to your door every year.

◆ THE BEST OF THE CHAT FROM THE PCZONE FORUM THIS MONTH. GET INVOLVED AT WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

Half-Life 2 was finally announced this month and we were there to break the news. Amazingly, Valve almost managed to keep it a secret right up to the agreed embargo date until a clueless US magazine let its subscription copies out early, enabling some young scamp to scan in their preview and post it online. Spookily though, just days before the world was enlightened *Wildpods* started a thread on our forum extolling the virtues of the original. "Any of you lot gone back and had another blast of *Half-Life* recently? I'm enjoying it again and I don't know how many times I've played it through. The marines are cool." And everyone else seemed to think it would be churlish to disagree. Jason_6780 gushed: "It's absolutely true. Nearly every game these days boasts that it has the greatest AI to date but the marines in *Half-Life* have never been bettered."

Then the news of the sequel broke, although not everyone shared the excitement. "I have to say that I feel sorry for Valve in a way, as *Half-Life 2* can't possibly live up to the expectations people have for it. In the end it will be another linear FPS with a familiar sub-*X-Files* plot bolted on. More of the same really but without the advantage that the original had of being the first game to offer 'cinematic' scope." Pete, thanks for proving that true cynicism isn't dead.

Thankfully though the rest of you seemed as excited as us. (And when we found out we were going to be the only UK mag to play the game we almost soiled our collective underpants.) Aniki summed up the collective consciousness of the forum: "I can't BELIEVE Valve has kept it under wraps for so long, they are fantastic. I can't wait to see what it looks like, this could be the biggest challenge for *Doom 3*... OMG I'm so excited, I just hope this isn't an April Fool's joke. Oh man, I can't wait" and G_Man_007 could do nothing to contain himself either. "OMG, OMG, OMG, OMG! Let's hope that this is the game that will finally surpass *Half-Life*, which is still the benchmark FPS in my book. Seems fitting after nearly five years."



Roll on September.

THE PCZONE A-LIST

SHOOTERS

UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING



Little can compare with the sublime beauty of *Unreal II*. The graphics are jaw-dropping, and the absolute pinnacle of what every FPS in the last year has been aiming for, only to never quite achieve. The arsenal of weaponry at your disposal is imaginative and satisfying to wield, while the sound effects, music – and even the voice acting – all exude quality. Quite simply, you can't go wrong.

PUB Atari **DEV** Legend Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 126



MEDAL OF HONOR

It's taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of topping *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes.

PUB EA **DEV** 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112



NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and genuinely funny – and it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

PUB Black Label Games **DEV** Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 122



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi **DEV** Valve Software

PCZ ISSUE 71



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Not a million miles away from the last *UT* title, *UT2003* does however make leaps and bounds graphically. With finely balanced weapons, smart bots and diverse maps it's the reigning king of speed fragging.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Digital Extremes

PCZ ISSUE 122



MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion

PCZ ISSUE 119



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a *PC ZONE* Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision **DEV** Raven

PCZ ISSUE 115



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

The bloodiest game in the world is back, but this time there's a brilliant game covering beneath the carnage. Sublime AI is the chief culprit and if you can stomach the violence this is a must buy.

PUB Activision **DEV** Raven

PCZ ISSUE 118



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi **DEV** Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 110



BATTLEFIELD 1942

Even though it features a disappointing and heavily bugged single-player campaign, *Battlefield* is one of the most compelling team-based multiplayer games ever. A must have for any online shooter fan.

PUB EA **DEV** Digital Illusions

PCZ ISSUE 121

STRATEGY

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.

PUB Activision

DEV Creative Assembly

PCZ ISSUE 120



RISE OF NATIONS

NEW ENTRY One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and all round freshness make *Rise Of Nations* a title worthy of our prestigious Classic award.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Big Huge Games

PCZ ISSUE 129



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail throughout and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere, plus it includes a decent map editor.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Ensemble Studios

PCZ ISSUE 123



WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

Warrior Kings was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging AI generals.

PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 128



COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The *C&C* series comes of age in this 3D orgy of scud missiles, daisy-cutter bombs and nuclear strikes. *Generals* is a superb looking game with well designed sides that offers fun in spades.

PUB EA **DEV** EA Pacific/Westwood

PCZ ISSUE 127



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Pyro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Blizzard

PCZ ISSUE 119



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV **DEV** GSC GameWorld

PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-er-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb and, as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON **DEV** Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWoD **DEV** Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112

Welcome to the **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers.

◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his magnum opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Bethesda Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 117



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series prove they are still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Infogrames DEV Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorch of an RPG.

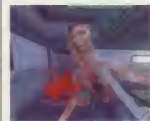
PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.

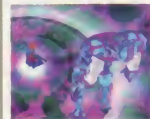
PUB Interplay DEV Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96



DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay certainly isn't.

PUB CDV DEV Larian Studios
PCZ ISSUE 121



FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and beasty of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



ARX FATALIS

This is a graphically beautifully role-playing game with more than a few hints of *Ultima Underworld*. Its hugely detailed and realistic environment made this a *PC ZONE* Essential.

PUB VU Games DEV Monolith
PCZ ISSUE 122

◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

SPLINTER CELL



At long last we've got a new king of the action adventures with the Tom Clancy influenced *Splinter Cell*, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über flexible Sam Fisher. *Splinter Cell* features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.

PUB Ubi Soft
DEV Ubi Soft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 125



GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71



SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering from Japan. From the lovingly-smeared blood and grime to the terrifying use of ambient sound, it's a class act.

PUB Konami DEV Konami
PCZ ISSUE 126



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tankerloads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original.

There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakfest.
PUB Konami DEV Konami
PCZ ISSUE 127



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics
PCZ ISSUE 111



DISCWORD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Infogrames DEV Perfect Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 79



THE THING

Drawing on some brilliant raw material from John Carpenter's classic horror movie, this survival action horror picks up the story where the film left off. It's one of the best film spin-offs around, with tense atmosphere and good gameplay.

PUB Black Label Games DEV Computer Artworks
PCZ ISSUE 121



PRISONER OF WAR

One of the most original games available with a light-hearted setting and an atmospheric soundtrack, which makes it more of an adventure than an action title. *POW* makes a refreshing change from the usual mass slaughter fare.

PUB Codemasters DEV Wide Games
PCZ ISSUE 121



HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

The revamped *Hitman* engine is nothing short of breathtaking, blessing the sequel with gorgeous graphics that fit well with the refined controls and superbly realistic AI. *Hitman 2* is solid and enjoyable with a great sense of gameplay freedom.

PUB Eidos DEV IO
PCZ ISSUE 121



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.

PUB Codemasters DEV Rebel Act Studios
PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Infogrames DEV Firaxis Games

PCZ ISSUE 111



THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA

PCZ ISSUE 87



CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions

PCZ ISSUE 70

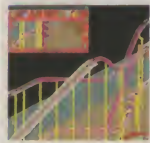


EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historical campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games

PCZ ISSUE 121

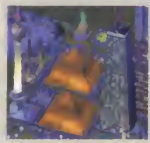


ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

As utterly absorbing as its predecessor, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 2* once again revolves around designing and managing your own theme park. This version also allows you to design individual rides as well as including a handful of real-life coasters. Detailed and addictive.

PUB Infogrames DEV Chris Sawyer

PCZ ISSUE 123



SIMCITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis

PCZ ISSUE 125



MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Infogrames DEV Deep Red

PCZ ISSUE 110



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog

PCZ ISSUE 79



CALL TO POWER II

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. It's still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision DEV Activision

PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ SPACE COMBAT ▶

FREELANCER



This is the first game for years to actually make an effort to refine the space-simulation genre, even if it doesn't manage to radically re-shape it. *Freelancer* combines the epic open-endedness of the classic *Elite* world with the combat immediacy of the *Wing Commander* series. It also mixes in a well played out (if somewhat short) story and gorgeous graphics to create a thoroughly engaging and very atmospheric experience.

PUB Microsoft DEV Digital Anvil

PCZ ISSUE 128

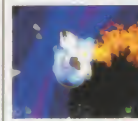


X - GOLD

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic.

PUB THQ DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 82

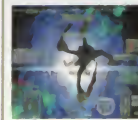


TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion, and we reckon it just edges out the mighty *FreeSpace 2*.

PUB www.macgames.co.uk DEV Vicarious Visions

PCZ ISSUE 93



Freespace 2

Following in the footsteps of *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. With an epic story and amazing graphics, it suffers from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUB Interplay DEV Volition Inc

PCZ ISSUE 84



EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

This title is likely to appeal more to the die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still goes some way towards advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing freeform gaming are inspirational.

PUB Infogrames DEV Particle Systems

PCZ ISSUE 104

◀ ONLINE ▶

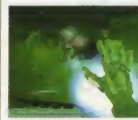
EVERQUEST



EverQuest keeps going from strength to strength and now has a total of four expansion packs. The latest, *Planes Of Power* (see page 72 for our full review), provides a multitude of simplifications to help newcomers, while adding lots of new worlds for high-level characters to explore. It's a truly beautiful and captivating game that has claimed the souls of thousands of people the world over.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Verant

PCZ ISSUE 117



NEOCRON

It's a much smaller world than the epic *EverQuest*, but there's a lot crammed into this *Matrix* meets *Blade Runner*-style MMORPG. The atmosphere is fresh, exciting and extremely engrossing. We see big things ahead for *Neocron*.

PUB CDV DEV Reaktor

PCZ ISSUE 124



ANARCHY ONLINE

A beautiful MMORPG with detailed environments and a huge selection of armour and weapons, which all add up to make an immersive title. Many of the bugs have been ironed out and the latest update offers a slick gaming experience.

PUB Funcom DEV Funcom

PCZ ISSUE 114



ASHERON'S CALL II

One of the smoothest, most graphically lush MMORPGs around, *ACII* is also extremely easy to pick up. It's still in need of work but hopefully Turbine will be providing the community with regular updates.

PUB Microsoft DEV Turbine Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 126



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

With some of the best graphics seen in an MMORPG, *Dark Age Of Camelot* creates an atmospheric, engaging and open-ended world. The scale of battles alone should ensure it remains popular for quite a while.

PUB Koch Media DEV Mythic Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 116

FLIGHT SIMS ▶

IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES



Much of what has been improved with this sequel to *IL-2 Sturmovik* has been done under the virtual bonnet of the game. *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* features improved AI, more accurate flight models and more of a realistic overall experience, plus more campaigns and even more planes. All of this adds up to make a truly exhilarating flying experience. Put simply, we think *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* is one of the finest flight sims ever to grace our screens.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** 1C: Madox Games **PCZ** ISSUE 128



MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** BAO

PCZ ISSUE 111



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!

PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 103



FALCON 4

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Microprose

PCZ ISSUE 72



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Wayward Simulations

PCZ ISSUE 96

3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky *Red Hammer* add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters **DEV** Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



RAVEN SHIELD

All the style and presentation you would expect from a Tom Clancy game, from the realism of the weapons down to footprints in the snow. A tactical and atmospheric game that can be frustratingly tricky at times.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Ubi Soft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 127



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: DELUXE

This revamp of *H&D* removes all of the infamous bugs from the original, as well as including three extra campaigns. There's been a lot of work put in to improving the graphics and modding fans will relish the new editor that ships with this edition.

PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 115



HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage **DEV** Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Planet Moon Studios

PCZ ISSUE 95

ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

PAUL 'LOCKY' WEDGWOOD, LEAD GAME DESIGNER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SPLASH DAMAGE, (WHO HAVE JUST RELEASED THE ACE WOLFENSTEIN ADD-ON ENEMY TERRITORY), REVEALS HIS TEN FAVOURITE GAMES OF ALL TIME



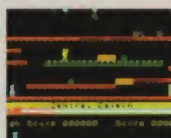
3D MONSTER MAZE (ZX81)

I have really strong sentimental feelings about my first ZX81 and Sinclair Spectrum. *3D Monster Maze* was the first computer game I ever played on a keyboard. There was something about the ZX81, despite its dreadful graphics and lack of sound, that made it amazing, and *3D Monster Maze* is the only ZX81 game I can still remember.



SPY VS SPY (COMMODORE 64)

In my book, *Spy Vs Spy* was the first and best 'true' multiplayer shooter. My passion for multiplayer games grew out of a love for *Spy Vs Spy* that I've never lost. I'm as fond of my memories playing against friends on the C64, as I am of all my years of playing *Quake* and *Team Fortress* in clans.



MANIC MINER (ZX SPECTRUM)

Manic Miner was my personal introduction to platform games, and represented a period of my life where everything electronic dazzled, stunned and beeped. I was just astounded by the colour, sounds and little animations. The really great thing was the sense of pressure you felt while your oxygen was running out.



JET SET WILLY (ZX SPECTRUM)

Almost the 2D predecessor to *Tribes*, *Jet Set Willy* evokes very fond memories for me. Mainly due to the fact that it was the game where I was given the chance to hone my skills of exploration and it also gave me daring reflexes, which would later lead to the annihilation of player after player in online multiplayer games.



MONTY MOLE (ZX SPECTRUM)

This is the third in a set of platform games that most fans of the ZX Spectrum, or any discerning retro gamers in general, would have in their Top 10. Amazingly, I had no idea at the time that this game had anything to do with the miners' strikes or Arthur Scargill. My naive youth, huh?



THE 4TH PROTOCOL (ZX SPECTRUM)

This was the first game that got me truly immersed in a plot. Not many people seem to remember it, but you played from a computerised desktop with a phone, and top-secret reports. You would put tails and taps on people, and slowly uncover a thrilling story of espionage and deceit. I was enthralled for weeks.



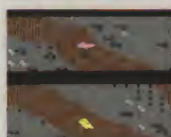
BRUCE LEE (ZX SPECTRUM)

Bruce Lee almost defined the platform and beat 'em up genres simultaneously. The game had me running from the little ninja and sumo non-stop, while trying to avoid the traps in true Indiana Jones style. A precursor to *Prince Of Persia*, and a game I'll always have really great memories of.



BACK TO SKOOL (ZX SPECTRUM)

The sequel to *Skool Daze*, I was almost tempted to put this at number 4, were it not for an annoying stage that had me completely stuck and eventually made me give up. In the tradition of the best adventure games, it was completely obscure and featured irrational acts that would secure your transition to the next stage in the game.



RACING DESTRUCTION SET (COMMODORE 64)

Despite waiting ages for this game to turn up, and then waiting even more time loading the constructor module, the end result, especially when setting silly features like low gravity, was amazing. A totally original racing game that probably stirred my interest in modifying games, which I've never seen done quite the same way since.



WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST (COMMODORE 64)

Way Of The Exploding Fist is my first and last truly enjoyable true beat 'em up. I've played lots since, and thought *Double Dragon* was fun (principally because it was original). However, there was nothing quite like the feeling I had the first time I learnt to use combo moves to defeat my best friend.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

EVERQUEST

Chris Anderson, our man in Norrath, pays tribute to the game that took away his social life, his youthful good looks and his credibility with the ladies



GAME *EverQuest*

DEVELOPER Verant

RELEASED 1999

INFLUENCED In an intensely competitive market, *EverQuest* is still brushing off all competition with barely a look over its shoulder. Every *EQ* expansion pack seems to set a new benchmark for online adventuring, leaving the competition further behind every time.

IT'S RARE to find two games in the same genre that have had such an equal and lasting impact on all the titles that followed them. But in the world of online RPGs, we find such a pairing. *Ultima Online* set a benchmark for online RPGs, with its incredible attention to detail, finely-tuned gameplay, open-ended character development and freedom to do whatever you wanted to do during your time in the game. It was a tough act to follow to be sure, but its success made it somewhat inevitable that other publishers would follow Origin's lead and attempt to expand on the precedent that had been set. Which brings us to the main event.

A company called Verant had its own vision of what an online world could and should be like, and while the company's designers were given a very convincing and proven template to work from in the form of *Ultima Online*, they largely ignored

it and instead ploughed their own, distinctive furrow. They created their own world in the shape of Norrath, with its rich and impressive cities and varied landscapes. They used the standard elves, ogres, trolls and wizards template, with melee and magic classes, which didn't sway from the well-beaten fantasy path. But they also did the one thing that Origin could never do with the technology

Origin for supremacy in a market that was still very much in its infancy. *Ultima Online* had extraordinary depth, but this was relatively easy to accomplish with a 2D graphics engine.

YOU'RE IN OUR WORLD NOW

Easy, that is, if you have a talent like Richard 'Lord British' Garriott (creator of the highly successful *Ultima* single-player

"EQ's designers did the one thing Origin didn't when it made *Ultima Online* – they made it feel 'real'"

available when it made *Ultima Online* – they made their world-famous time-eater *EverQuest*, feel 'real'.

Verant's decision to use 3D technology in *EverQuest* right from the beginning was the deciding factor in their battle against

RPGs) behind the whole operation. There was little point in trying to take Garriott on at his own game, a fact that was not lost on Bill Trost, one of the original *EverQuest* designers: "We knew about *Ultima Online*, and we knew the general direction they



were taking. We really set out to make our own game, a game we wanted to play, and hoped we would achieve a fraction of *UO*'s success."

EverQuest, which may have seemed shallow at first when compared to Garriott's complex creation, immediately grabbed hold of gamers with its totally immersive and atmospheric 3D landscapes. And four years later, it still has not let go. At a time when 3D technology was still a largely untapped resource, Verant used it to create a world unlike anything ever seen before on PC.

"There were many key decisions in the development of *EverQuest*," says Bill. "Making it a game that would run only on 3D accelerated platforms sure was a big one. But it paid off in spades."

It would be easy to attribute *EQ*'s success to simple aesthetics and leave it at that, but in truth there were many factors that played a part in *EQ* slowly

gaining a vice-like grip on the online gaming community. Not least of these was the variety of the in-game environments. There were several starter towns for different races and classes, which served to introduce players to the game. And any *EQ* veteran will be happy to convey to you the sheer sense of wonder and awe they experienced when



Planes Of Power is an awesome expansion and an essential buy.

travelling from Kelethin (the wood elf tree city) right across the land to Qeynos (human city) for the very first time. Upon arrival at one from the other, it was almost like you were suddenly playing a different game, so distinct was the culture and artwork in the city of Qeynos to its counterpart in Kelethin, or indeed the high elf city in Felwithe. The same applied with Neriak, the city of dark elves, again a different proposition altogether. And so runs the theme throughout the entire world of Norrath. Each continent has many wildly varying realms, rich with cities and NPCs, and if you are going to pick out a single reason why *EQ* is so far ahead of the competition, then this one is as good as any.

There is so much to see and do in the game that it's almost impossible to get bored, and starting a new character in a new city adds massive replay value because

PROFILE

Bill Trost is lead game designer for *EverQuest II*. Bill was one of the original members of the *EverQuest* team, serving as both co-creator and lead game designer on the initial *EverQuest* release, in addition to contributing as an artist on the project. Bill also served as the lead game designer on the first two *EverQuest* expansion packs; *EverQuest: The Ruins Of Kunark*, and *EverQuest: The Scars Of Velious*. The world of Norrath is largely based on the tabletop role-playing campaigns that Bill began creating more than 20 years ago.



NAME Bill Trost

ROLE ON EQ Lead game designer

NOW WORKING ON *EverQuest II*

INFLUENCES *Dungeons & Dragons* (pen and paper), *Castle Wolfenstein* (Apple II), *Dungeon Master* (Amiga), *Talisman* (board game), and *System Shock 2* (PC).





It's a harpy, EQ-style.



Yes, in the beginning, character models looked pretty crap.

The new *Legacy Of Ykesha* expansion is already a huge hit with the *EQ* faithful.

they don't just give you a new character class to play with, they give you a whole new world. But for all *EverQuest*'s visual innovations at launch, it also followed the highly controversial precedent set by *Ultima Online* by releasing its initial code in something of a mess. Bill remembers the log-on nightmares well.

"The launch was rocky, but mostly due to our unexpectedly huge popularity. So it was a good problem to have. We actually gave initial subscribers a few extra weeks of play for free while our bandwidth problems were resolved."

Despite a less than satisfactory launch, however, *EQ* rapidly gained momentum and its instant popularity surprised everyone, including the team. Bill

continues: "We thought it would be a good game and that people would like it, but we were coming into a new market with a new fantasy world, so our expectations were taking that into account. Luckily for us, we made a lot of good decisions within the design of the game and the design of Norrath. Now it's four years later and Norrath is bigger and more popular than ever."

ALTOGETHER NOW

One of the most important design decisions the original creators made has stayed with us to this day, and remains highly controversial and the subject of much discussion in online gaming circles. The dilemma: should they give the game world to the players and let them discover it and fight the creatures of Norrath alone if they so desire? Or should they implement a game feature that makes it necessary to team up with other players for dangerous regions in the game?

They chose to implement a system of 'grouping' where players would work together to overcome difficult obstacles,

and share the experience and loot gained from the kills. It's a simple game mechanic, and it formed the backbone of the *EverQuest* game experience, something many believe to be a crucial factor in *EQ*'s ongoing success.

But still there are people who complain about being forced to group with other players. They want to go solo and kill things themselves, without having to play in a group. In other words, they want a single-player game in a multiplayer environment. The most common reason for this complaint is some people just don't have the time to look for other people to group with and they want a

quick 'fix' whenever they log on.

EverQuest has always catered for these people to an extent by creating classes such as necromancers and druids who could effectively take on many of the creatures in the game alone – at least up until they reach the high-level areas. But the core of the game remains focused on grouping. And judging by all the expansion packs released thus far, this will continue to be the case.

Many of *EQ*'s rivals have attempted to capitalise on this with varying degrees of success by making it easy for players to 'solo' and play the game more or less by themselves should they want to. *Dark*

THE BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY


Star Wars Galaxies: its name alone will count for a great deal.

CAN YOU SPOT A FUTURE EVERQUEST-KILLER AMONG THESE HOPEFULS?

There is no shortage of competition on the way for *EQ*, *Star Wars Galaxies* posing the most obvious threat, though there are mixed reports coming from beta. Nonetheless, the licence alone will guarantee the game a huge subscriber base. You would have to be pretty foolish to bet against *EverQuest 2*, with its photorealistic graphics and a proven template which almost ensures success before it even gets off the ground. *Shadowbane*'s dated graphics and awkward interface do it no favours, but already it's attracting a lot more players than anyone expected. *Asheron's Call 2* has lost most of its initial subscriber base through lack of content, but Turbine's plans for the rest of the year are pretty convincing so it can't be discounted. And let's not forget *World Of Warcraft*: Blizzard's track record in bringing top quality games to market on a regular basis speaks for itself.

Ages Of Camelot, *Asheron's Call 1* and *2* and *Anarchy Online* are most noted for this (although *AC2* appears to be heading towards a more group-oriented game in the future). They all cater to the solo crowd in different ways and to different extents. Whether this is a good or bad thing is a matter of opinion, but as to whether it's the best move in a financial sense, you only need to look at the overwhelming popularity of *EverQuest* when compared to even its nearest rival to find your answer. Again, Verant (now incorporated into Sony Online Entertainment), shows it's more in touch with its player base than any of its rivals. It



The Ruins Of Kunark expansion introduced easier places to level up.

knows it can't please everyone, but it can please the majority. It always has done, and there's no reason to believe this will ever change. The fact it has stuck firmly to its guns with a group-oriented game from the beginning, and never swayed once, is yet another reason it's leagues ahead of the competition. You can argue the merits of solo versus group play all you want, but you can't argue with facts, and the server population figures for *EverQuest* tell their own story. Whether other online game developers want to take note of this or not is, of course, entirely up to them.

THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

Four years is a long time to play any game. Even with *EverQuest*'s huge and diverse world, sooner or later players were going to outlive the content and master the trade skills, and of course reach the highest level in the game. The answer to this problem, as we're sure you have guessed, came in the form of the many expansions released for *EverQuest* to date. In this area, Verant/SOE has again excelled. The *Kunark* and *Velious* expansions both enriched the game in every way possible, bringing huge landmasses, new weapons and armour, new quests and tons of NPCs and dungeons to an already vast game. Even at this point it was always going to be a huge task for any new online RPG to touch *EverQuest* for content, because the world of Norrath had already evolved so much it was going to be next to impossible to compete with it.

The penultimate nail in the coffin of all would-be pretenders to the *EverQuest* crown was the *Shadows Of Luclin* expansion, which brought a new graphics engine, new player models and a new interface, along with all the usual innovations *EQ* players expected from their expansions. As if *Luclin* wasn't

enough to send the competition running for cover, the developers unleashed the final blow to all online game developers with the release of the absolutely awesome *Planes Of Power* expansion. Never before has any game, single or multiplayer, been changed and enhanced so dramatically by an add-on expansion. New methods of transport, a new level cap, a huge city full of vendors of all descriptions for every race and class in the game and a whole host of new planes for high-level players made *PoP* an absolute must for anyone even remotely interested in *EQ*. And now the *Legacy Of Ykesha* expansion has been released (review coming soon), the world of Norrath is bigger than ever.

To complement the expansions, new members of the *EQ* live team have been busy implementing changes such as soulbinders, easier ports and an easier and less painful path through the lower levels for newcomers to the game. All of which proves they listen to their players, and more importantly keep an eye on what their competition are doing.

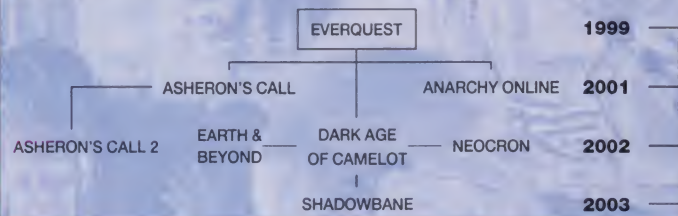
Bill explains: "As the game has matured and new people have come on board the *EverQuest* team, long fought-for changes finally had the support they needed to be implemented. And there was much rejoicing by players and developers alike. I try to play all of our competition to one degree or another. We pay attention to decisions they make and try to learn from the things they do right as well as the mistakes they sometimes make. This industry is still very young."

Young the industry may be, but for many people the biggest success story has already been written. And apart from *Star Wars Galaxies*, which will surely attract half the world for no reason other than it is *Star Wars*, the only real threat on



BRING IT ON

IN THE FOUR YEARS SINCE *EVERQUEST* WAS RELEASED, MANY ONLINE TITLES HAVE APPEARED, ALL HOPING TO REPLACE IT AS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ONLINE RPG OF ALL TIME. THEY HAVE ALL FAILED COMPLETELY AND WITHOUT EXCEPTION. IN FACT, NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THEM HAS EVEN COME CLOSE TO KNOCKING *EQ* FROM THE TOP OF THE TREE



the horizon for *EverQuest* is *EverQuest II*. Will this mean the end for the Norrath we know and love? Over to Bill: "*EverQuest* is going to continue to grow and be supported for as long as people want to play it. *EverQuest II* is

a different game and is being designed to complement and coexist with *EverQuest*. Because *EverQuest II* takes place in the same universe, but 500 years into the future, we have some interesting ideas as to how the two games can grow and interact with each other."

There is no doubt then, that *EverQuest* will be around for some time to come in one form or another. For now, it remains the most addictive and complete online role-playing game currently available by a very, very long way. And to any online game developers attempting to take on *EverQuest* at its own game, we say you are going to have your work cut out – hardened players don't call it *EverCrack* for nothing, you know. For many people, *EverQuest* not only changed the world, it is the world. [E]



Shadows Of Luclin: more than an expansion, almost an entirely new game.

"EQ II takes place 500 years after EQ, so we have some interesting ideas how the two games interact"

BILL TROST
LEAD DESIGNER, *EVERQUEST II*

NEXT MONTH

NEXT MONTH

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

Massive World Exclusive first-look preview and screenshots of this stunning sequel. It'll blow you away.

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE**

REVIEWS EXTRAVAGANZA!

HUGE WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW...

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

The single-player version of the world's favourite online shooter is all but ready. Check out how it fares in our World Exclusive review next month.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

Definitive review of Rockstar's mega-hit

RED FACTION 2

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II

ISS3
Can it take
FIFA's
crown?

UNBEATABLE DISKS INCLUDING...

The World Exclusive Demo of the best strategy game of 2003, Rise Of Nations. And that's just for starters...

E3 PREVIEW SPECIAL: PART 2



The second in our two-part E3 preview roundup, including all the latest news, playtests and screenshots from the biggest names at E3, including:

Doom III, **Half-Life 2**, **Halo**, **Rome: Total War**, **Deus Ex: Invisible War**, **Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines**, **Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy**, **Splinter Cell: Shadow Strike**, **Unreal Tournament 2004**, **Republic: The Revolution**, **The Movies** and many more...

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE: THURSDAY JUNE 26

RETRO ZONE

YOUR REGULAR DOSE OF GAMING NOSTALGIA

"It had the lot – lightsabers, force powers, stormtroopers, men with beards and a Rancor"



A sexy female lead with a ponytail? Whatever next?

**RETRO
ZONE**

**MARCH
1998**

A cool, sunny and mainly dry month according to British weather sources, probably due to the giant dust cloud sweeping across the Pacific Ocean from China. *Paul Presley* digs out his retro facemask...

JEDI KNIGHT: MYSTERIES OF THE SITH

Ooh, yeah. Can you feel the force... again?

THERE'S A thin line between popular franchise and milked-out cash cow and *JK:MOTS* straddled that line like a rodeo rider straddling a prize-winning bull. You'll be too young to remember this I'm sure, but there was a classic age of *Star Wars* games such as *Dark Forces*, *X-Wing Alliance* and even *Rebel Assault*, which had charms to soothe the savage beasts within.

JK:MOTS was perhaps the last *Star Wars* game to arrive in a condition somewhere remotely near playable, arriving on the coat-tails of

the *Dark Forces* double whammy. It had the lot – lightsabers, force powers, stormtroopers, men with beards and a Rancor.

LucasArts' *Star Wars* titles were always at their best when they didn't attempt to retell the film's storyline, but told of life within the larger universe, only occasionally touching on the film elements (one reason why hopes for *Star Wars Galaxies* are so high).

Unfortunately, George Lucas insisted on pushing ahead with his 'vision' for a prequel trilogy and so the fate of the gaming franchise

was sealed until *Jedi Knight 2* last year. Playing back through the sprawling levels, impressive architecture and intelligent implementation of The Force just reminds you how much better life used to be for *Star Wars* fans.

Still, there is a new hope (ho ho) on the horizon. *Knights Of The Old Republic* promises to get back to some good old fashioned Jedi ass-kicking and should the aforementioned MMORPG prove to be a hit then maybe we can eradicate the memories of *Super Bombad Racing* forever more.



Brilliantly designed levels.

THE BEST OF THE REST



FALLOUT (PC)

Inexplicably one of ex-ZONE 'god' Charlie Brooker's all-time favourite games. We'd like to think it was because of the highly refined turn-based role-playing game dynamics, the believable post nuclear war setting and the myriad of intriguing storylines. But it was probably just because the zombies explode real nice, like. Sigh...



BATTLEZONE (PC)

True retro-heads have fond memories of the arcade original this 'remake' was based on – not because of the gameplay or graphics, but because of the funky, tank controls/periscope viewer built into the cabinet. Sadly Activision based this version on the former elements and the whole thing was roundly ignored by all.



GANJA FARMER (ALSO DOPE WARS) (PC)

No, not a belated April Fool, this really did exist. A hyper-colourful and simplistic *Space Invaders* sort of thing in which fearless Rasta soldier, John Parker, defended his stash from 'The MAN' with his bong of death (honest). Also released around this time was *Dope Wars*, a similarly 'controversial' effort.



F-22 ADF (PC)

The last of the truly great modern-era flight sims? Possibly, although *Falcon 4* fans would probably argue the point until you were bored into submission. DID were the masters of their art and like all great artisans, totally ignored in their own time by all but a handful. Died penniless (or taken over by the French, if you like).

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM MARCH 1998

•More proof that games are bad for your health arrives when one cyclist is killed and another is injured near Marseille in Southern France when a 27-year-old woman driver slams into the back of them with her car. The woman was distracted when a Tamagotchi electronic pet that was attached to her key chain started demanding attention.

•Nintendo makes even more fans around the world by announcing a new, sleek, colour version of its popular GameBoy handheld console. Meanwhile, rumours continue to circulate about a new piece of hardware from Sega, codenamed Katana, later revealed as the Dreamcast.

"It's always been my dream to create an awesome top-down 2D isometric RTS based on the history of Scotch-land."

D Colorado

DENVER COLORADO'S

HISTORY RE-WRITTEN

SCOTTISH LUGS

MANAGE YOUR FOOD SUPPLIES

Keep your men on the brink of heart failure with battered Mars Bars, battered sausages, battered haggis, battered chips, battered Iron Brew and battered Special Brew. If the enemy don't get them, then the saturated fats will.

PLAY AS GREAT MILITARY LEADERS

William Wallace, Robert McScrotebag, James McMcMc, Ronald McDonald, Begbie, Ally McCoist... and Scotland's most feared and notorious clan leaders, The Proclaimers.

10 UNIT TYPES

Including Caber-Tossing Artillery, Suicide Head-Butting Squads, Exploding Sporan Throwers, Rabid Scottish Widows, Bemused Farmers, Incoherent Babbling Glaswegian Drunks and Deep Fat Fryer Mangonels.

FEATURES INCLUDE...

REAL-TIME GRAPHICS

5 million colours on screen at any one time*

• BATTLE AGAINST VARIABLE WEATHER EFFECTS

Scotch mist, fog, drizzle, light rain, heavy showers and torrential downpours.

• SOUND

Hideously catchy and overly repetitive cat-torturing bagpipe dirge

• HUGE BATTLES

Battles of up to 42,000 troops at a time**

• STEALTH UNITS

Prove that size isn't everything in war***

*All sheets of grey

**Max 4 units on screen at any one time

***All units so small you need a peeing microscope to see them. (Microscope not included)

THEY CAN TAKE OOR LIVES, BUT THEY'LL NEVER TAKE OOR CHIPPIES...

THE EARLY morning mist envelops the Scottish Moors as you look across the battlefield at the English hordes massed against you. You're the commander of a proud army, made up of fearsome one-armed farmers, drunkards and puss-faced teenage boys, armed with a devastating array of weaponry including hoes, rakes and broken beer bottles. It is time to lead your men into a battle they cannot possibly win...

Scottish Lugs is a historically inaccurate and ignorant portrayal of Medieval Scotch-land, depicting the nation as a bunch of pissed-up, malnourished godless simpletons in need of saving by the

benevolent Sassenachs. From award winning† game designer Denver Colorado of US-based games development company Crapsoft, *Scottish Lugs* is the fourth title in the ill-observed and insulting racial-stereotype History Re-Written series, which includes *Irish Potato Farmers*, *Bestial Welsh Sheep Lovers* and *English Inbreds*.

As one of several great historical Scottish commanders, can you lead your Scottish Lugs to a hideous and inevitable death? The annihilation of a nation lies in your hands.

† International Games Journalist Award for Worst Game Ever 2000, 2001 and 2002



"It's rare to see a game quite as... good... and as... playable. *Scottish Lugs* is the **PERFECT** example of how... to make a good game. We really... like it..."

UNOFFICIAL STUDENT MAG OF THIRIBLETWAT COLLEGE FOR THE NASALLY IMPAIRED

*Ze number of ze polygons on each hill iz

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